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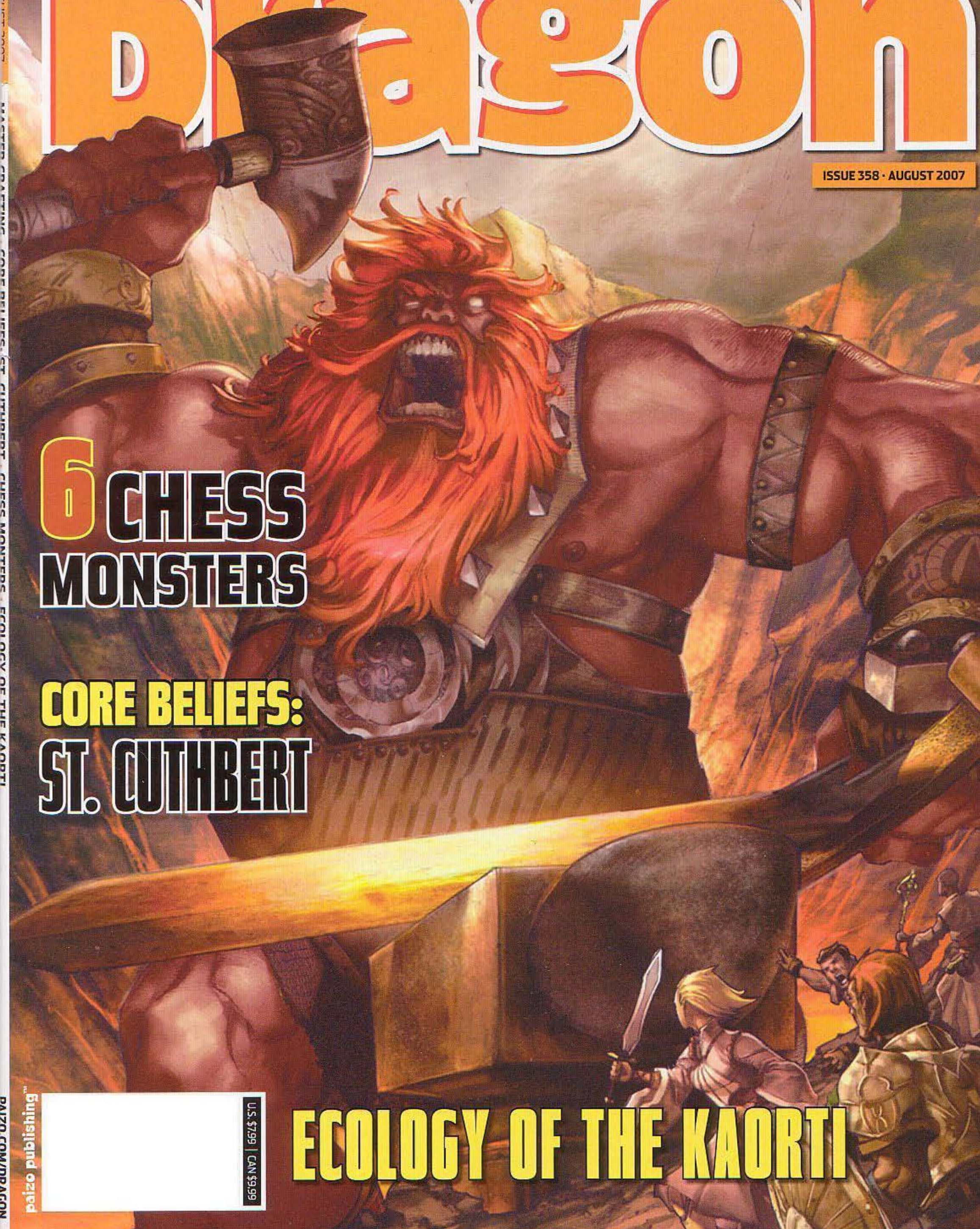
Dragon®

ISSUE 358 · AUGUST 2007



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CORE BELIEFS: ST. CUTHBERT

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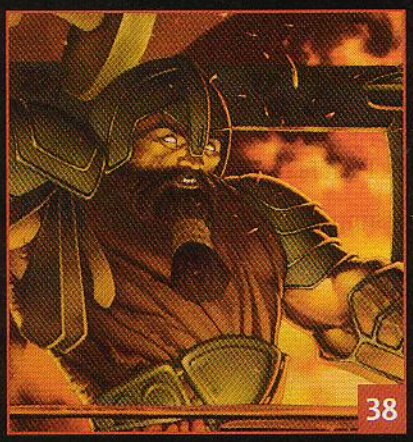

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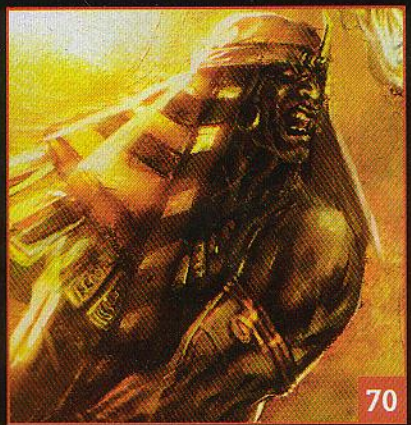

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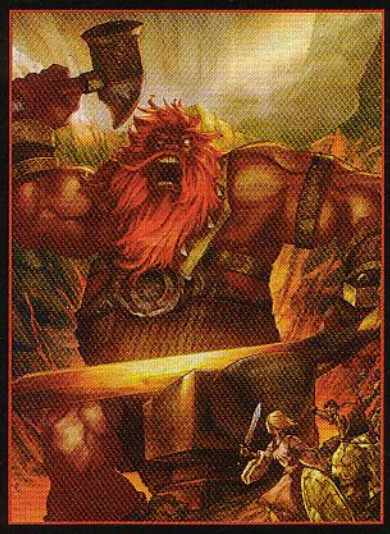

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RELIABILITY

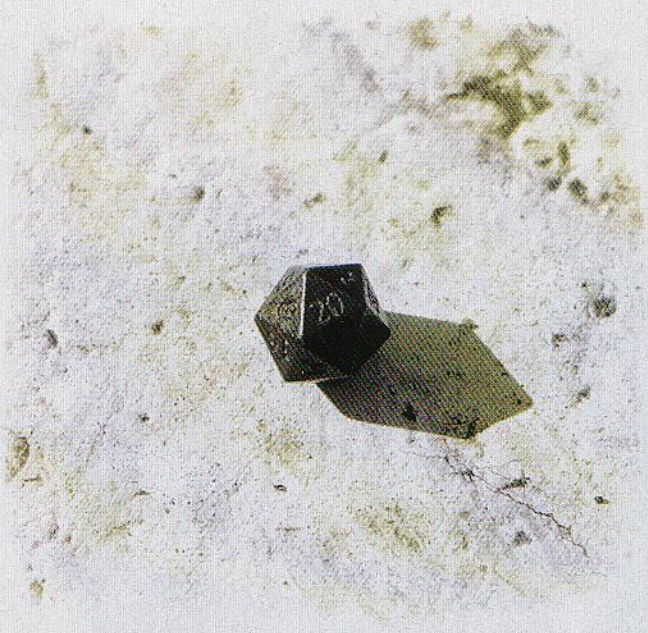
I've been playing D&D for about 19 years now. For me, the game has always been a reliable source of entertainment. Even in my most stressful times, when work or life was just too hectic, I always had a game coming up to look forward to. Growing up in Milwaukee certainly helped. Having both Gen Con and Winter Fantasy in my backyard meant that even when gaming was lean there was still a major convention right around the corner. As I got older, Origins got added to the list, along with a raft of other, smaller shows.

Other aspects of the game have been constantly reliable for me over the years as well. Rolling a 20 on an attack roll or a saving throw has always been a good thing. Wizards have always been my favorite class to play. Never swing your sword at a rust monster. The list goes on and on. A few years back, a new constant was added to my gaming life. While wandering the dealer hall of Gen Con, I noticed the fine folks over at Crystal Caste were selling dice carved from a meteor. Although the price tag on a single d20 was astronomical, one of the tiny cosmic terrors found its way home with me by the end of the show. Since then, I only use the die to confirm critical hits for my characters and for the villains when I DM. Although not a constant, the die rarely lets me down, scoring more deadly crits than any other die I have ever owned. How could it fail me? It came from space, where all the evil things dwell.

Then, of course, there is *Dragon*. *The Dragon* and I were born in the same month in 1976. While I didn't read a single issue for about 13 years, it has steadily produced quality content, month after month, for all these years. While some eras have been better than others, the magazine has always provided new insight and ideas for the game we all cherish.

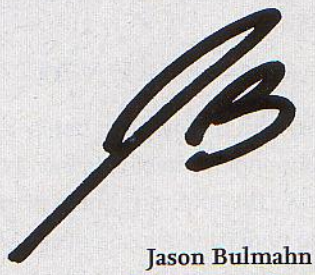
Of course, as reliable as D&D has been for all these years, change is inevitable. Fortunately, not all change is bad. Gen Con moved from Milwaukee to Indianapolis, while Winter Fantasy (now called D&D Experience) found a new home in Washington DC. Although I loved the old MECCA convention center, I think I am starting to like the new sites even more.

Rolling a 20 is still great, but with each new edition, the game itself has changed. Rust monsters are still scary, but I just don't fear giant spiders like I used too, many of which used to be able to kill with a single bite. Wizard is still my favorite class, but many of the others now have much greater appeal. I might even play a bard one of these days. My meteoric d20 is still quite reliable, although even its deep-space powers falter now and again. I think it helps that it is not quite "true" in shape—not that such a small detail will stop me from using it, much to my players' chagrin.



Then there is *Dragon*. Although it has undergone a number of changes over the years, the biggest one yet is now only a month away. It gets delivered to my desk now, instead of my mailbox, and soon it will arrive in my web browser. I hope this new change allows it to grow and prosper long into the future.

I never dreamed I would work on *Dragon*, and let me just say that it has been a privilege to help deliver this great magazine to you for that past three years. I have passed up a number of opportunities to write editorials, figuring that one day it would be my monthly responsibility. I just wanted to take this opportunity to say thank you for reading, and doing so reliably.



Jason Bulmahn
Managing Editor
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FROM THE PUBLISHER

Readers,

Recently, Wizards of the Coast decided not to renew Paizo Publishing's license to create and distribute *Dragon* and *Dungeon* magazines. Both magazines will cease publication following the release of their September issues, which ship to subscribers and newsstands in August. The final issues of the magazines will be *Dungeon* #150 and *Dragon* #359.

Wizards of the Coast will be moving the kind of content currently found in the magazines to an online model. Both companies remain on good terms and continue to discuss future opportunities for publishing partnerships. As more information becomes available on Wizards of the Coast's plans for the *Dragon* and *Dungeon* brands, we'll keep you updated in the remaining issues of the magazines.

Paizo will continue to create products compatible with the world's most popular roleplaying game. In addition to our existing line of GameMastery accessories like Item Cards and the new Critical Hit Deck, this summer will see the debut of two exciting RPG lines from the same creative minds that have brought you the magazines these last five years. In June, Paizo kicks off its new GameMastery Modules line, featuring monthly 32-page adventures from top designers like Nicholas Logue, Richard Pett, Wolfgang Baur, and Jason Bulmahn! Each lavishly illustrated full-color GameMastery Module is designed to be used easily in a wide variety of campaigns, and will meet or exceed the expectations you've come to expect from Paizo Publishing.

August sees the debut of *Pathfinder*, a new monthly 96-page, perfect-bound, OGL-compatible full-color softcover Adventure Path book printed on high-quality paper. Over the last several months, the same editors who bring you *Dragon* and *Dungeon* have been developing the next evolution in RPG campaigns, and we hope you'll take some time to look at what we have to offer. *Pathfinder* will be sold at hobby retail stores, bookstores, and online at paizo.com, and—though it's a book, not a magazine—we'll be offering a subscription service for gamers eager to add a vorpal edge to their campaigns. In fact, you can subscribe to *Pathfinder* right now and receive a free bonus *Player's Guide* to the first *Pathfinder* Adventure Path: Rise of the Runelords.

Speaking of subscriptions, the discontinuation of *Dragon* and *Dungeon* will leave many of our valued subscribers with excess subscription credit. Paizo has set up a special transition web page at **paizo.com/transition** that offers multiple options to these subscribers. A brief summary of these options follows:

***Pathfinder*:** Current subscribers can transfer their existing post-September subscription credit to monthly volumes of *Pathfinder* at a generous discount as an easy way to try out the new publication. This is your opportunity to get in on the ground floor of this major new series, and we'd certainly love the chance to keep delivering exciting gaming content to you on a monthly basis.

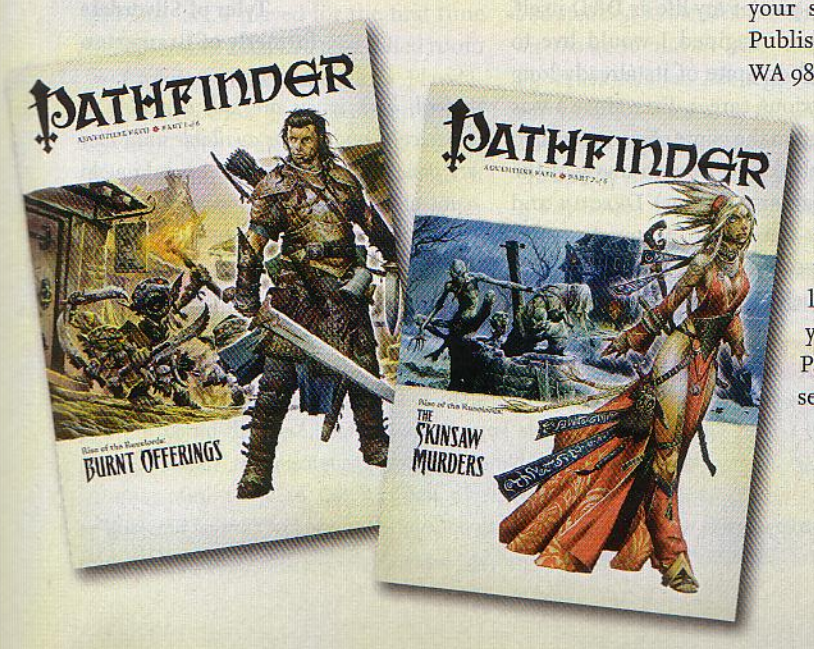
***Dragon* and *Dungeon* Back Issues:** Subscribers can choose to receive select back issues on a one-for-one basis based on remaining subscription credit. This is a great way to fill holes in your collection.

Paizo.com Store Credit: Paizo.com is the Internet's leading online hobby store, with more than 22,000 gaming products from hundreds of publishers. Subscribers can swap their excess subscription credit for store credit on our website at a generous 120% exchange rate.

Refund: If none of the above options appeal to you, Paizo will issue you a refund check for your remaining subscription credit. (Refund checks will be issued starting October, 2007, and may take several weeks to arrive.)

Subscribers without access to the Internet should contact our Customer Service Department for more information about the above choices and a form to help you make your selection. Write us at Magazine Transition/Paizo Publishing, LLC/2700 Richards Road, Suite 201/Bellevue, WA 98005. We anticipate a large volume of mail related to the transition, so please be patient with us as we address your needs.

Dragon and *Dungeon* have been the backbone of Paizo Publishing since we spun off from Wizards of the Coast's periodicals department in 2002, and both magazines have been an integral part of the RPG publishing world for decades. Bringing the magazines to you every month has been a true honor, and we in the Paizo family look forward to the continuing honor of serving your gaming needs for years and years to come.



Sincerely,

Erik

Erik Mona
Publisher

SCALE MAIL

Tell us what you think of this issue. Send an email to **scalemail@paizo.com**. Please include your name, city, and state.

NOOOOOOOOOOO!!!!!

I can't believe it! I have been reading and collecting *Dragon* (and *Dungeon*) magazine for years and have been a long-time subscriber. A friend broke the news today in an email and said "this is an end of an era." I couldn't have said it better.

I eagerly looked forward to EVERY issue of *Dragon* arriving in the mail, as I have found the magazine to be interesting and enjoyable on so many levels. The various articles and content that have made their way into the magazine have always been a help in one way or another to my games.

While not everyone always agreed with the material that was presented in *Dragon*, there was no doubt that the magazine was dedicated to its readers. I had (sniff) my favorites like The Order of the Stick, Sage Advice, and the various Ecologies, but there was something for everyone. While this is the first time that I have ever written a letter to *Dragon*, I would hate to think I would never have the opportunity again.

I know that *Dragon* (and *Dungeon*) will continue to be produced as an online publication, but there is just something about holding a freshly printed magazine straight out of the wrapper and thumbing through the pages to read my favorite articles first. My friends would be standing in line to get it when I was done reading it.

I will be sad when the last edition arrives in my mailbox. I resubscribed for 3 years when mine ended last and would have been a lifetime subscriber because of the fine work that TSR, Wizards, and now Paizo have provided in the past.

I know that production costs have been increasing over the years and, even with the increased number of subscribers/gamers, this was an inevitable outcome. Online magazines are easier and cheaper to produce while still offering the same high quality and to a greater number of people. I am glad that Paizo was able to make the last several years of *Dragon* better and better.

With my sword raised high, I salute you. With my glass in hand, I toast you. With my head bowed in respect, I mourn you. You will be missed, dear *Dragon*.

Bryon Pope
Via Email

ALL GOOD THINGS

As you are no doubt being flooded with responses to the end of the world's two greatest magazines, it is with great remorse that I write this and add to the pile.

While it is true that all good things must come to an end, it makes it no easier to bear. Your magazine has been as much a part of my life as D&D itself, and I never imagined I would live to see its end, in spite of its already long and illustrious career. Ever since I was introduced to the game eleven years ago (but the blink of an eye to many of the veteran gamers, I know) *Dragon* and *Dungeon* have been as much a part of Dungeons & Dragons as dice and graph paper. Hell, up until a year ago, I had been spending six bucks a pop on them every month like some schmuck!

You gave me the Forgotten Realms, you gave me the Age of Worms (which I always hoped to see as a hardcover Adventure Path), and countless other priceless memories for my game. You were a member of the group; you had your own seat at the table and were an important part of our Tuesday night. Your art was spectacular, and the articles never failed to sate my appetite for another month. I myself always dreamed of illustrating (or even still, writing!) for your one of your memorable issues.

You will be missed, but Paizo does offer hope in the new *Pathfinder* Adventure Path. If it is as good as the art that graces its pages (courtesy of Wayne Reynolds), then I will definitely be keeping an eye on you guys. No hard feelings of course, I have been putting off buying a few back issues, and now I have incentive to do so... Back Issues are still available, aren't they?

Tyler of Silverdale
formerly of Bremerton

Indeed, back issues are still available at ***paizo.com****, and will be available until they are gone. The announcement has brought a lot of attention to the website, though, so you might want to place orders sooner rather than later to ensure that you get what you want.*

GALE FORCE NINE CONTEST WRAP-UP

DRAGON TALK

Congratulations to Kenneth A. Dunn of Newark, California on winning May's Gale Force Nine Contest! Kenneth picked up a slew of Gale Force Nine's (**gf9.com**) magical walls, spell-effects, and miniature markers to use in D&D or any mini's game. Thanks to everyone who entered and check back here for one last contest blowout!

Well Missed Dragon

I was stationed in Mannheim, Germany in the fall of 1978. On a Saturday afternoon, a friend suggested we go watch some friends of hers play "fantasy role-playing games." I had never heard of such a thing, but something new was something new.

We went and she introduced me to Roger, a young man with short, curly hair and rather large glasses. Roger suggested that, rather than watch, we create characters and play along. That was it; I was hooked. And I had the very good fortune to have Roger E. Moore as my first DM!

I learned as much about all the facets of the game as I could and was DMing within three months—probably not very well, but that was the era of hack-and-slash gaming and an actual plot line was a remote secondary concern.

Since we were away from the States, all of our gaming materials had to be mail-ordered. A friend had all four copies of the *Strategic Review*, the precursor to Dragon magazine, which, once discovered, became my primary source of ideas. I began collecting the magazine, and when I returned stateside the next June, I started a subscription.

Tom Armstrong
Nashville, TN

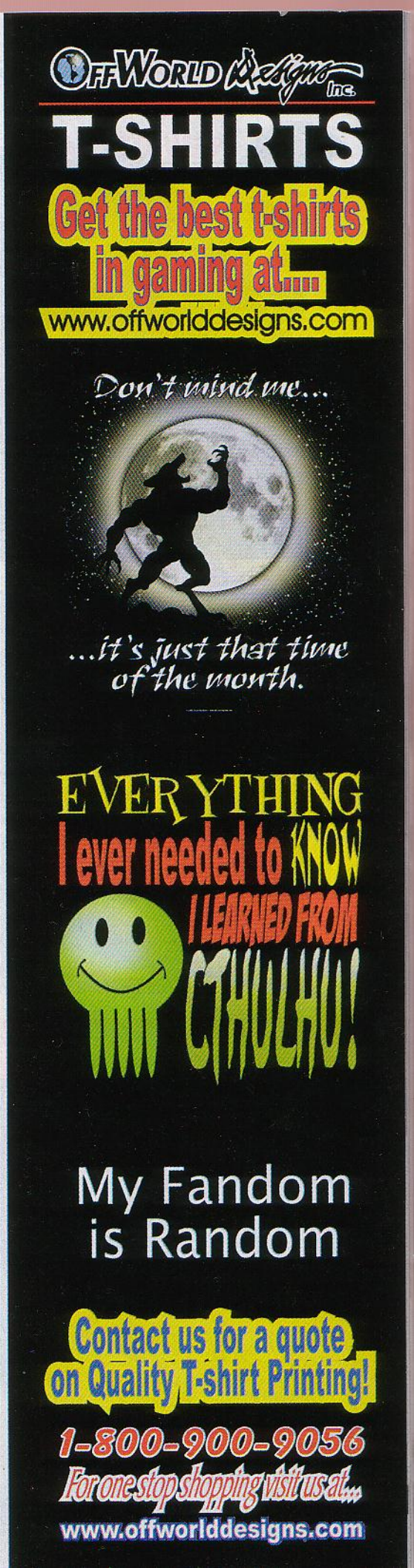
Dead Dragons in Baghdad

I haven't been playing D&D for a long time. In fact, I played for the first time in September 2004 in a dust-filled room in Baghdad. This was before Playstations and XBox 360s absorbed all of soldiers' free time downrange and I was introduced to gaming by some of the soldiers. They had been playing for years and were looking for an excuse to start up an adventure to fill our down time. Through quick reaction missions, raids, and patrols, we managed to slay kobolds, goblins, driders, and even a young dragon. When I moved to a new unit, I searched for new companions to game with. I didn't have time to sit down and create my own adventures, so I pulled most of the adventures from Dungeon and I fleshed them out with Dragon. I became an avid reader of both and have enjoyed all of the material that has been published over the three years that I have played. I will miss Dungeon and Dragon magazines. No longer will I be able to pine over the shelves of the bookstore waiting for the next editions to be published. So, fare thee well Dungeon and Dragon. I look forward to whatever Paizo and Wizards of the Coast come up with to fill the void that will be left by your cancellation.

Sam Fishburne
Birmingham, AL

And that's just a sample of the hundreds of letters we have received since the announcement of the end of Dragon and Dungeon magazines. Working on these great publications has been a career highlight for all of us here at Paizo, and we (like you) will miss them greatly when they are gone. I've been working with the magazines for 8 years, now, going all the way back to Wizards of the Coast. I've attended dozens of conventions to support the magazines, I've written more than a hundred editorials and articles for them, and I've read thousands of reader letters over the years. When I found out the magazines would be shifting to an online format, I immediately anticipated a strong emotional reaction from the readers, because by the time I came to work on the Dragon staff I'd been a reader for more than 20 years. I too will miss the monthly thrill of opening the mailbox to discover the new treasures inside Dragon and Dungeon, and speaking as the editor-in-chief, I'll miss the chance to interact with readers here in the letters column. I'm eager to see what our friends at Wizards of the Coast have in store for a digital version of Dragon and Dungeon and wish them the best of luck. If they'll have me, I'll even try to contribute once in a while. But we've got one month left in the run of the original, printed Dragon magazine, and I intend to make it one for the record books.

Come back to your mailboxes in 30 days for our spectacular last issue. Ed Greenwood, Margaret Weis, Larry Elmore, the Monster Hunter Society, the tarrasque, 30 of D&D's greatest villains, and yours truly will be right there with you until the very end.—Erik Mona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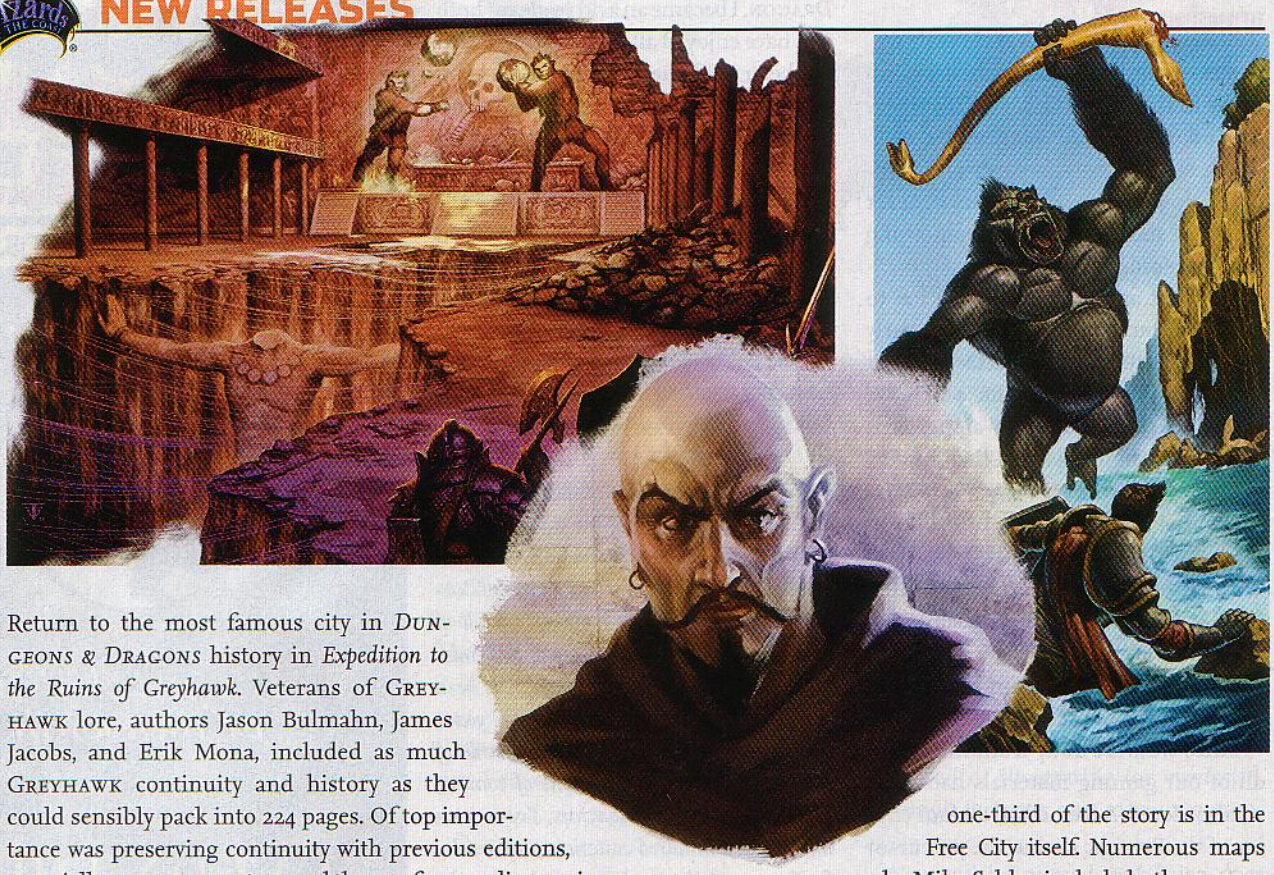


Return to the most famous city in *Dungeons & Dragons* history in *Expedition to the Ruins of Greyhawk*. Veterans of Greyhawk lore, authors Jason Bulmahn, James Jacobs, and Erik Mona, included as much Greyhawk continuity and history as they could sensibly pack into 224 pages. Of top importance was preserving continuity with previous editions, especially maps, encounters, and themes from earlier versions of Castle Greyhawk. Jacobs adds, "When we were doing the dungeon, we brought in other adventures—not necessarily Greyhawk—using two in particular: *Isle of the Ape* and *Dungeonland*." There was also an effort to maintain old-school-style encounters throughout, made all the easier by updating some first-edition monsters.

Although much of the adventure takes place inside the three castle towers and dungeons that comprise Castle Greyhawk, one-third of the story is in the Free City itself. Numerous maps by Mike Schley include both an overview of the city and a glorious dungeon cut-away showing all twenty-five levels. Since detailing the entire dungeon was unrealistic, the authors treated it like wilderness terrain, with several random monster charts each themed to a level of the dungeon.

Delve deeper into the mystery and history of Greyhawk with *Expedition to the Ruins of Greyhawk's* web-enhancement at **wizards.com**.

NEXT MONTH IN DRAGON #359

THE SUPER-SIZED FINAL PRINTED ISSUE OF DRAGON!

SUPER VILLAINS OF D&D
Rediscover the evil of D&D's twenty most maniacal villains.

DEMONOMICON OF IGGWILV: APOCRYPHA
The *Demonomicon's* profane appendices, new demon lords, monsters, and more!

RELICS OF GREYHAWK
Treasures of the Flanaess, unearthed from the depths of Castle Greyhawk.

MYSTERIES OF D&D
Dozens of D&D's darkest secrets finally revealed!

THE WIZARDS THREE
Wherein D&D's most powerful wizards discover they've been spied upon!

PLUS
Elminster vs Raistlin! The Ecology of the Tarrasque—featuring the return of the Monster Hunters Association—the final Volo's Guide, Dragonmarks, Savage Tidings, Class Acts, Comics—including Order of the Stick—and more!

reported by Shelly Baur, William Christensen, Mike L. Fiegel, and Mike McArtor

GEN CON INDY

Celebrating Gen Con Indy's fortieth anniversary, this year the adventure's bigger than ever. "I have been looking forward to this blowout event for years," said Peter Adkison, CEO of Gen Con. "I really want it to celebrate all that gaming is and what it means to us in the worldwide gaming community." This year's industry guest of honor is Gary Gygax, co-creator of DUNGEONS & DRAGONS. Attendees can look forward to old favorites like *True Dungeon* and the *Costume Contest*, and new events as well, such as the *Family Fun Pavilion*. "[It is] a great new way to help families and kids find the games which are really targeted to them," said Adkison.

This year, Gen Con Indy runs from Thursday August 16th to Sunday August 19th, again taking place at the Indianapolis Convention Center. Pre-registration ends July 9th, but attendees who haven't already registered can still purchase single-day, weekend, or full-convention badges at the door. While visitors can expect all the Gen Con standards they've come to love—like the exhibitor's hall, art gallery, LAN network, Cardhalla, games, and more—check out **gencon.com** for a complete schedule of other events, details on downtown Indianapolis, and more on this year's special gaming industry guests, media celebrities, and anniversary attractions.

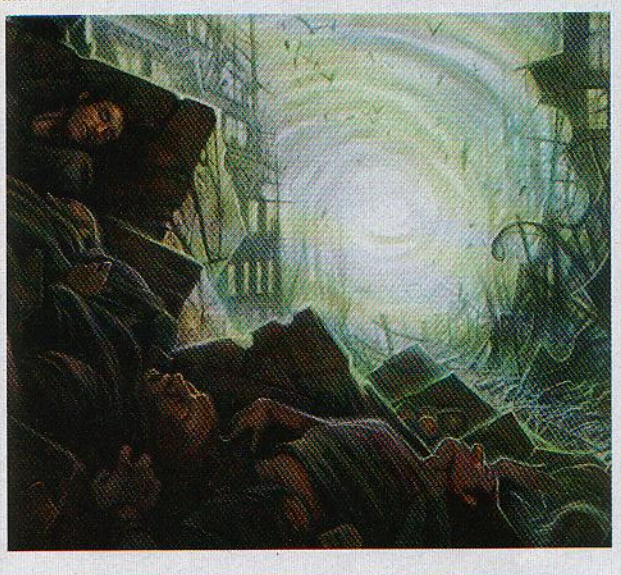
COOKING UP DARKNESS

In *Monte Cook's World of Darkness*, Cook pens his own unique vision of White Wolf's (**white-wolf.com**) dark, gothic-modern setting—home to the *Vampire, Werewolf, Mage, Changeling,* and numerous others. According to Cook himself, this will be the final book he writes in the roleplaying genre.

"Re-imagining things in Monte's own inimitable style is something we know will be exciting to our fans," said Rich Thomas, White Wolf's Creative Director.

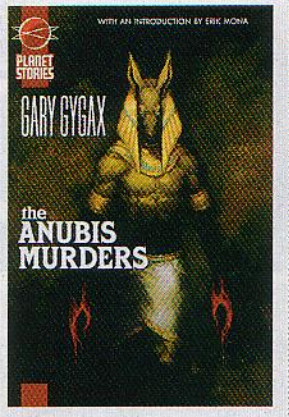
The game features a new backstory for the creation of vampires, werewolves, mages, demons, and Awakened as they wield supernatural powers in a dark, future apocalyptic world. It will also use the d20 System instead of the Storyteller system.

Monte Cook's World of Darkness is scheduled for release at Gen Con Indy this month.



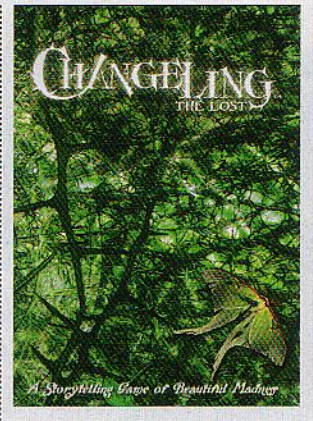
ELEMENTS OF POWER

Adding 52 all-new cards to Paizo Publishing's already impressive lineup of beautifully illustrated Item Cards comes *Elements of Power*. This time, in addition to the elementally themed weapons, suits of armor, magic items, and other pieces of adventuring gear, the cards of *Elements of Power* also feature items from the first three volumes of *Pathfinder* and GameMastery Modules. Like all Item Cards, though, even these specific items remain undefined and adaptable for use in any campaign.



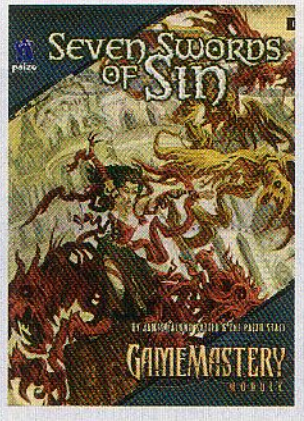
PLANET STORIES

Beginning this month, Paizo Publishing launches its new line of classic fantasy, science fiction, and science fantasy novels: Planet Stories (**paizo.com/planetstories**). Each novel presents the work of one of the genres' earliest creators (C.L. Moore and Leigh Brackett for example) with introductions from modern masters (such as Michael Moorcock and Ben Bova). Paizo begins building the Planet Stories library with Gary Gygax's *The Anubis Murders* this month and Michael Moorcock's *City of the Beast* in September, continuing to present at least one sci-fi or fantasy novel every month thereafter.



EVERYTHING CHANGES

Changeling returns this month with White Wolf's new edition of the fey RPG, *Changeling: The Lost*. "*Changeling* is a game of beauty and cruelty, of passion and loss, of dreams and madness," said game developer Ethan Skemp. "You have struggled your way back through the thorns only to find your life had been stolen from you. Now you make your way the best you can, attempting to piece together the fragments of your lost life." This new version of the game allows players to cross over into other World of Darkness settings, or to play entirely within the *Changeling* setting. For more, visit **whitewolf.com/changeling**.



SEVEN SWORDS OF SIN

Paizo Publishing's featured Gen Con Indy delve event, GameMastery Module *D2: Seven Swords of Sin* features the creative talents of about half of Paizo's staff within its 32 full-color pages. DUNGEON assistant editor James Sutter took on the challenging task of combining the various writers' disparate ideas into a cohesive whole, including a bunch of new rooms and a story that ties everything together. *D2: Seven Swords of Sin*, which takes place within a deprived pit of villainy inside the realm of Varisia, is meant to challenge 7th-level characters.

HELL DORADO

Marketed as "The first skirmish miniature game made for mature audiences," *Hell Dorado* by Asmodee (**asmodee-us.com**) allows players to choose their warband from among five factions, including conquistadors, mercenaries, devils, and others, in their quests to control the City of Gold. The catch, though, is that the mythic city does lie in a new world: Hell. The miniatures are beautifully (and grotesquely) sculpted, and would make perfect additions to any DM's or player's collection. *Hell Dorado* is currently available only in France, but a stateside release is scheduled for this year.

THIS MONTH IN DUNGEON #149

WAR OF THE WIELDED

by Michael Kortes

Centuries ago, two rival thieves' guilds crafted a number of intelligent weapons to aid them in their conflicts. Although the guilds are now long dead, their weapons continue their endless battle. A D&D adventure for 5th-level characters.

TWISTED NIGHT

by Stefan Happ

A coastal village has mysteriously depopulated and the only survivor, a lone prisoner in the local jail, has gone mad. What does this village's sinister fate portend for the Moonshae Isles? A FORGOTTEN REALMS adventure for 8th-level characters.

ENEMIES OF MY ENEMY

by Wolfgang Baur

The time has come to draw your plans against the Prince of Demons! Travel to Hades, Arborea, and the depths of the Abyss to recruit allies from the eladrin court; rival demon lords; and Iggwilv, the Witch Queen herself! Yet will this unlikely alliance of demons and eladrin be enough to stop the savage tide? A Savage Tide Adventure Path scenario for 19th-level characters.

Pathfinder™

While *Dungeon* and *Dragon* magazines are transitioning to an electronic format, Paizo Publishing's printed Adventure Paths live on with *Pathfinder*, a full-color, 98-page soft-cover book releasing every month. "We'll be using these Adventure Paths to flesh out an entirely new campaign world, in the theme of how the old first-edition adventures fleshed out Greyhawk," said *Dungeon* and *Pathfinder* editor-in-chief James Jacobs. "Each volume of *Pathfinder* includes an adventure, at least six new monsters (all culled from mythology, cryptozoology, or the imaginations of our authors), an installment of the Pathfinder's journal (a monthly expansion of the campaign world), and at least two support articles for the campaign." Available at game stores, online, or delivered to your door via month-to-month subscription, each Adventure Path spans six adventures, taking players from 1st to at least 15th level. Aside from the adventures, readers can also expect in-depth explorations of Paizo's new campaign setting, details about powerful new deities, particulars on some of the best-known creatures in fantasy, and rules and options custom-designed for characters playing the Adventure Path. Subscribers can even download a complete PDF of each volume, along with numerous other online supplements available for free at **paizo.com/pathfinder.** In addition, players can get the *Rise of the Runelords Player's Guide*—an introduction to the realm of Varisia and character primer for the new Adventure Path—either in print at their local game store or as a free PDF at **paizo.com.**

"Burnt Offerings," an adventure by James Jacobs, launches the new *Rise of the Runelords* Adventure Path, in *Pathfinder* volume #1, which releases this month.

DRAGONS OF THE SILVER SCREEN

by Mike L. Fiegel • art provided by Epic Level Entertainment & Paramount • special thanks to ***dragonlance-movie.com***

Throughout the 1980s, D&D players had plenty of Hollywood material to draw from for inspiration. Those were the days of films like *Beastmaster, Hawk: the Slayer,* and *Conan the Barbarian,* when men were men and future governors of California were dressed in loincloths. Yet for all they had, D&D fans never quite got what they really wanted: their own movie. After 26 years of high hopes, false starts, and rumors, fans finally get their chance to see Tanis, Raistlin, Goldmoon, and all the rest of the Heroes of the Lance in their very own movie, as *Dragonlance Chronicles: Dragons of Autumn Twilight* gets ready for release this fall.

PROJECT OVERLORD

First, a little background.

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS had been around for about a decade before TSR acknowledged that while they had published plenty of dungeons, they hadn't yet released any modules that focused on dragons. Several designers pitched their ideas for a new product line focusing on these titular creatures, but it was newcomer Tracy Hickman whose idea won the day. So began "Project Overlord," the goal of which was to produce a twelve-part series of modules focused on dragons.

The DRAGONLANCE development team—including Tracy Hickman, as well as TSR veterans such as Douglas Niles, Jeff Grubb, and artist Larry Elmore—soon decided that the adventure modules should be supplemented by a trilogy of fantasy novels, and a fantasy writer was hired to begin work. Hickman, however, and the line's new book editor, Margaret Weis, both agreed the pages sent to them were not up to par. Thus, Weis and Hickman—expanding upon details taken from the Dragonlance roleplaying sessions—churned out a prologue and the first five chapters of a book over a weekend and submitted the pages to a senior editor the following Monday.

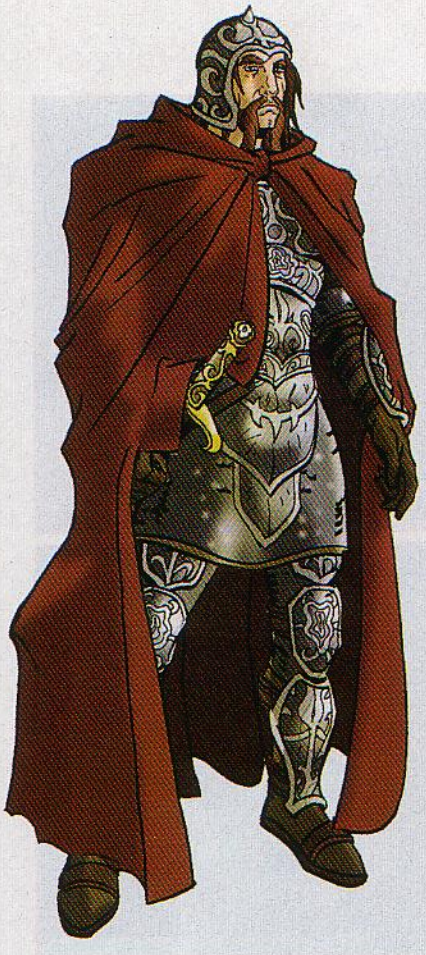
Obviously, they got the job.

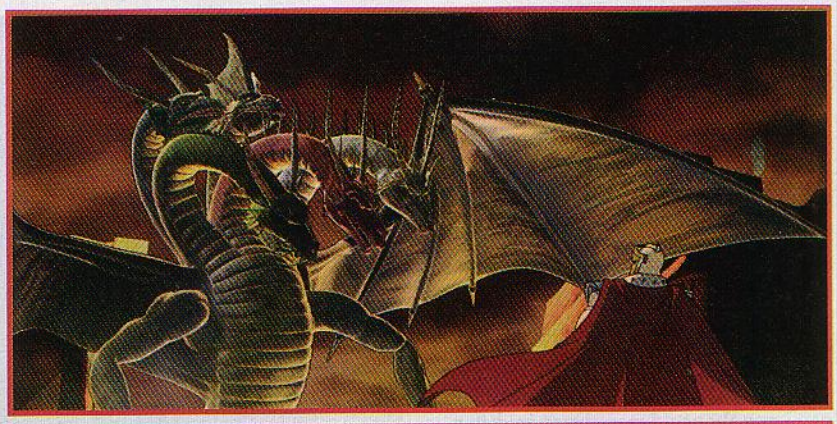
So it was that the first DRAGONLANCE module, *DL1: Dragons of Despair,* was published in 1984, along with the first novel, *Dragonlance Chronicles: Dragons of Autumn Twilight.* The novel went on to make the New York Times bestseller list and helped produce one of the most prolific fantasy series in history, currently standing at more than one-hundred-fifty titles (many of which were penned by Weis and Hickman).

Yet for all that paper and ink, one of designers' and fans' greatest dreams has been for DRAGONLANCE's vibrant world and unforgettable stories to make the transition to the silver screen. But it has not been an easy task. The first rumors of a DRAGONLANCE movie surfaced in 1995, a decade after the publication of the first novel. That film was to be an animated movie, although it was set in-between *Dragons of Autumn Twilight* and *Dragons of Winter Night* and told the story of the search for the Hammer of Kharas (as detailed in modules DL3 and DL4). TSR soon scrapped the project, though, for reasons of—as Margaret Weis puts it—production company Nelvana wanting "to go off in a bizarre direction."

In the years that followed, rumors of talks with 20th Century Fox and Jim Henson Productions leaked, and in 2003 Wizards of the Coast's Peter Archer confirmed suspicions that the DRAGONLANCE movie rights had been optioned by a British production company. Unfortunately, nothing seemed to pan out and the company's option rights lapsed in 2005.

Later that same year, rumors began to circulate about a new deal with Paramount, and work began in earnest (and in relative secrecy). It wasn't until June of 2006 that the news about the film's production was officially leaked by Lucy Lawless, who announced on her website that she was the voice of Goldmoon. Margaret Weis confirmed the news a few days later.





RIGHT PLACE, RIGHT TIME

Perhaps no one has been more crucial in the making of this film than co-Executive Producer Cindi Rice. In 1995, she signed on at TSR as a designer and editor for DUNGEONS & DRAGONS. When Wizards of the Coast purchased TSR in 1997, she was put in charge of D&D campaign settings, and by the time Hasbro entered the picture she was in charge of licensing for the entire RPG line. In 2001, she transferred to Hasbro's Los Angeles entertainment division and again broadened her focus, working with the entertainment rights for all of Hasbro's speculative fiction titles.

"As is the standard for Hollywood, tons of deals were set up, although few made it through to production," said Rice (who, it must be noted, has worked on both *Dungeons & Dragons: Wrath of the Dragon God* and *Gamers: Dorkness Rising*). "I even set up a few DRAGONLANCE entertainment deals as well, but none of them got off the ground."

That is, until she met Steve Stabler,

LOOK WHO'S TALKING

At least equally important as the visuals of an animated film are the skills of the voice actors. The cast of the DRAGONLANCE film is headed up by several well-known television actors: the bearded Tanis is somewhat ironically voiced by Michael Rosenbaum, best known for his role as the bald Lex Luthor in the TV series *Smallville*; Goldmoon is voiced by Lucy Lawless, best known as the star of *Xena: Warrior Princess* and, more recently, in *Battlestar Galactica*; and Tika Waylan is voiced by Michelle Trachtenberg, who played Buffy's little sister Dawn in *Buffy The Vampire Slayer*.

But, what everyone wants to know, of course, is who's playing Raistlin? None other than Kiefer Sutherland, of 24 fame. Can he pull off the raspy, wheezy voice and acidic commentary of an archmage-who-would-be-a-god? Time will tell, but if his performance in *Dark City* is any indication, he'll fill Raistlin's boots admirably.

The rest of the voice cast is rounded out by a team of talented and experienced voice actors, including the following:

Tanis Half-Elven: Michael Rosenbaum
Goldmoon: Lucy Lawless
Raistlin Majere: Kiefer Sutherland
Caramon Majere: Rino Romano (*The Batman*)
Flint Fireforge: Fred Tatasciore (*TMNT*)
Tasslehoff Burrfoot: Jason Marsden (*Loonatics Unleashed*)
Sturm Brightblade: Mark Worden (*God of War II*)
Tika Waylan: Michelle Trachtenberg
Riverwind: Phil Lamarr (*Kim Possible*)
Fizban: Neil Ross (*Spider-Man 3* game)
Elistan: Ben McCain (*Black Scorpion*)
Laurana: Caroline Gelabert

an independent producer who had recently signed a deal with Toonz Animation to create an as-yet-undetermined animated feature film. Stabler's partner worked at Paramount, and Rice convinced the duo (and Paramount) that DRAGONLANCE should get a shot at the silver screen—in animated format. Rice was quick to insist that this doesn't mean the end of the line for live-action feature film hopes.

"Every studio in town has seen *DRAGONLANCE* about a dozen times, in different formations and with different creative teams attached—all to no avail," said Rice. "I don't think that means that a live-action movie will never happen... That is still a very viable option."

In fact, the film was originally written as if it was going to be live-action, according to screenwriter George Strayton. You may not know him by name, but you've likely seen his work. Strayton has done writing and editing for books based on the *Star Wars, Indiana Jones,* and *Men in Black* licenses, and has written episodes for *Cleopatra 2525, Xena: Warrior Princess,* and *Hercules: The Legendary Journeys.* He's also no stranger to the game industry; not only has he been gaming since the late '70s, but he was a staff designer at West End Games, where he worked on the Origins Award-nominated *Men in Black.* It was at a DragonCon in Atlanta where he first met Cindi Rice, setting the stage for them to work on the *DRAGONLANCE* film years later.

"The first project we worked on together was the GREYHAWK movie, mostly because we were disappointed in the D&D movie," he said. "We pitched to every studio in town and had garnered some interest, but in the end, as with most things in Hollywood, it never got made."

Luckily, the *DRAGONLANCE* film has come a lot further.

PARENTAL GUIDANCE IS SUGGESTED

According to Strayton, the plot of the film "follows the general structure of the book almost dead-on." Solace, fleeing with the blue-crystal staff, draconians and specters, the Forest

Master, Xak Tsaroth, Onyx, Fewmaster Toede, Pax Tharkas, Verminaard, Pyros, and—yes— Bupu.

"At one point, Margaret voiced her concern that the scene showing the parting of Raistlin and Bupu had been cut and she wanted it put back into the script," said Strayton. "I was overjoyed because it allowed me to add something back."

It is worth noting that the film has being targeted for a PG-13 rating in the US (12A in the UK). Translation: the creative team isn't cutting corners or pulling punches when it comes to the storyline.

"This is a story for adults (13 and up) and I wanted to make sure it stayed that way when it was transformed into another medium," said Strayton. "My biggest nightmare was to see *DRAGONLANCE* turned into a 'kids' movie."

Cindi Rice pointed out, however, that a lot of the content in the *DRAGONLANCE* novels is not appropriate for a very young audience. "We didn't want to shoehorn those things in just to ensure a more 'adult' rating," she said. "Although there are a few intense scenes which we're not shying away from." Riverwind's encounter with the business end of an acid-breathing black dragon comes to mind.

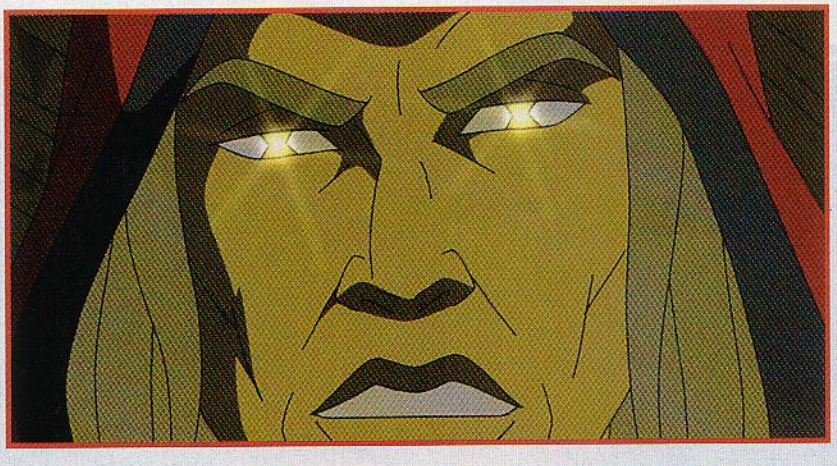
"We're really just doing our best to approach everything in the film from an adult sensibility and think about the story and characters in a mature way," she added.

IN LIVING COLOR

So what's it look like?

"We're trying to remain true to the original *DRAGONLANCE* style created by Larry Elmore and Jeff Easley, but with a slightly updated sensibility, much like the comic books did," said Rice. To that end, much of the original character artwork for the film was done by Kunoichi, the company behind the *DRAGONLANCE* comic art.

Of course, as this is a different medium, different tactics have been employed. The *DRAGONLANCE* movie uses a hybrid of 2D and 3D animation, with the main characters drawn in 2D, other creatures (such as dragons) por-



trayed in 3D, and the environments and backgrounds being a mixture of 3D and 2D layers.

"The movie has about 1600 [scenes], which involve some kind of interaction between 2D and 3D elements," said Director Will Meuginot. "Like when a draconian grabs Goldmoon's hair or when Sturm's sword gets caught in a dead draconian's stone body. Even simple scenes like Tika's first meeting with Fizban at the inn will employ particle FX to imply there's smoke in the air from the fireplace and special lighting FX."

Meuginot is best known to genre fans as the artist and co-creator of the *DNAgents* comic book series. He's also produced or directed a number of well-known animated series, including *The X-Men, Spider-Man Unlimited, The Real Ghostbusters, Jem,* and *Conan The Adventurer,* was nominated for two Emmy awards, and has received awards for his work on *Captain Planet* and *Spydogs.*

Toonz Animation, the studio handling the complex animation work on the DRAGONLANCE film, is the largest animation studio in India and a co-producer of the film (along with Commotion Pictures and Epic Level Entertainment).

"Their job has been made doubly difficult by the decision to keep the graphics as detailed as possible," said Meuginot. "Sturm's armor is a nightmare for any animator who has to draw every detail in every frame of animation."

AUTUMN DAWNING

As it stands right now, the *DRAGONLANCE* movie (currently late in the post-production stages) is an approximately 100-minute animated feature film adaptation of *Dragons of Autumn Twilight.*

"If we get a chance to release the film theatrically I'm sure we will," said Rice. "The final decision will be made by Paramount, based on the status of the marketplace when the movie is released. They have guaranteed video release though, which makes us very happy. The video market is the strongest part of the entertainment business these days."

The film is slated for an Autumn 2007 release (as befits a movie with this title), and if the rumors are true, you'll want to keep mid-November open on your calendar, just in case.

As to the obvious question: Rice said that there have always been plans to do an entire Chronicles trilogy, but those involved in the making of the film are waiting to see how the first one does. In other words: Will it sell?

"Also, with the release of the Lost Chronicles, we're still discussing with Margaret and Tracy what the next story should be," added Rice. "Should we go next to *Winter Night?* To *Dwarven Depths?*"

For the answer to that question, and all the latest info on the *Dragonlance* movie, visit **dragonlance-movie.com.**

SAINT CUTHBERT

BY SEAN K REYNOLDS

illustrated by Andrew Hou • cartography by Robert Lazzaretti

Saint Cuthbert is the curmudgeon of the gods of Oerth—set in his ways, certain he knows best, and quick to gripe about the shortcomings of others. Despite this, he is a benign god who holds an unwavering dedication to law and good. His no-nonsense attitude appeals to commoners and frontier folk who live hard lives, and many champions of the people rise from the ranks of the Cuthbertine faith. Plainspoken and intolerant of backsliding, he is a stern disciplinarian in a world where evil lurks just out of sight. Common sense and honesty are the basis of good character, and if these virtues were more common, everyone would be better off. He is a practical deity who gets the job done, for nothing is worth doing if not done well, whether that means raising a barn or crushing an orc's skull.

CORE BELIEFS: SAINT CUTHBERT

SEAN K REYNOLDS

Saint Cuthbert is a very old deity of rural communities, representing order, common sense, zeal, honesty, and truth—properties necessary for small communities to survive and prosper. His origin is unclear and he has no obvious ties to any of the human races or pantheons, leading some to speculate his religion began on another plane and somehow spread to Oerth long ago. His worshipers claim he was once a great mortal man, now rightfully ascended to godhood to continue his good works. He is a deity familiar to all civilized folk and accepting of all races, creeds, and nationalities. He teaches that hard work, truth, forthrightness, and discipline are the keys to just rewards in this life and the next. Lies, sloth, and moral weakness lead to wickedness and failure. He is a stern paternal figure, stingy in praise and quick to lecture, but doing so out of love and concern for his followers and layfolk alike.

Saint Cuthbert is the patron of honest, goodhearted folk willing to stand up for themselves and others in the face of danger, evil, or contrary opinions. He does not take kindly to ruffians, lawbreakers, and those who disagree too vocally with his methods. Saint Cuthbert is in the heart of the vigilant sheriff watching over a town, the farmer protecting his livestock from bandits, and the city guard patrolling a neighborhood to keep it safe. Although not a war god, he goes to battle when necessary, just as he expects his common worshipers to take up arms to defend hearth and home when evil threatens.

Despite his very specialized portfolio, his interests and practicality give him a broad appeal to many common folk—farmers, hunters, woodsmen, carpenters, or other tradesmen. This popularity means he has many followers who might otherwise choose a more specialized deity, and it allows everyone in a community to hold him as his patron and be unified in faith (while still making token prayers to appropriate deities such as Pelor for healing). Cuthbertine communities tend to be more close-knit, increasing their prosperity and survival compared to a more religiously-divided community.

Saint Cuthbert sees things mostly in terms of black and white, with only a few narrow shades of gray in the middle, for it is just common sense to realize exceptions exist to every rule. For example, there are laws against thievery, but a man whose family is starving might have to steal food to provide for them. Such a man must be punished, but not to the same extent as someone who steals out of greed or to harm another. If the penalty for stealing is death, the food-stealing farmer certainly doesn't deserve that and might just get a whipping.

THE BASICS

Saint Cuthbert is a lawful good deity with strong lawful neutral tendencies (due to his hard-line stance, many treat him and his faithful as lawful neutral with good tendencies, but this opinion is a disservice to his faith and only originated with bookish sages who like to organize all things into simple and convenient categories). Approximately two-thirds of his clerics are lawful good and about one-third are lawful neutral. A tiny number of extremists who venerate Saint Cuthbert are lawful evil (although the mainstream church does not recognize them as part of the faith, and technically they are a fundamentalist cult rather than a part of the main church). It is important to note that none of his clerics are neutral good, despite the theoretical possibility of such in a lawful good clergy; in Saint Cuthbert's eyes, order is the only way to promote goodness, and those who lack the discipline to be lawful are barely worth any attention even if they are wholeheartedly good.

Saint Cuthbert's priesthood is organized into three orders: the Chapeaux, which seeks to convert others to the faith; the Stars, which enforces doctrinal purity; and the Billets, which ministers to and protects the faithful. Chapeaux traditionally wear a crumpled hat, Stars wear a dark green robe with a starburst, and Billets wear russet clothing. His three symbols define the three orders of his church—a crumpled hat, a starburst of rubies, and a wooden cudgel—and a cleric always uses his order's symbol on his own items, although he acknowledges the other two as valid and worthy of respect.

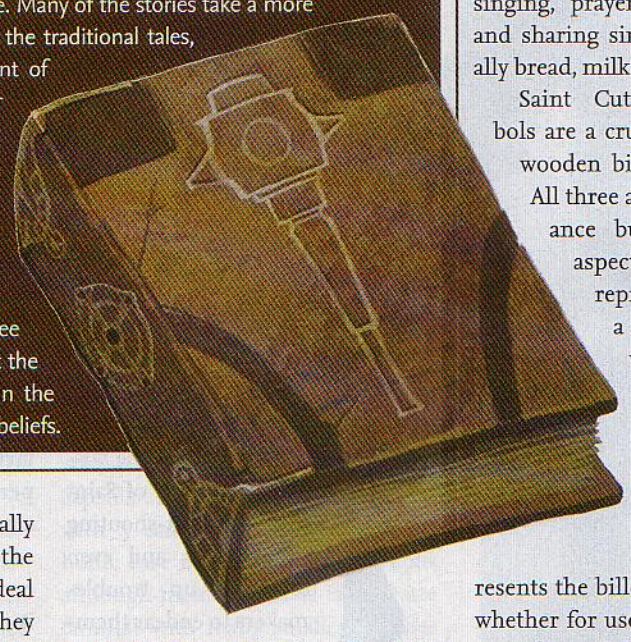
Saint Cuthbert has no official names other than his own, although he is often described as "Cuthbert of the Cudgel." His realm, in Arcadia, is called the Bastion of Law or the Basilica of Saint Cuthbert. He sometimes intervenes directly on the Material Plane, typically to act against Iuz the Evil (although sages believe the forces of Balance only allow this at a cost of permitting evil direct intervention at a later time). His portfolio includes common sense, wisdom, zeal, honesty, truth, and discipline. His primary worshipers are common folk, town guards, and missionaries; the local veteran with a strong arm and an eye for justice is exactly the sort of "rustic hero" that gives Saint Cuthbert a good name. His domains are Destruction, Law, Protection, and Strength. His favored weapon is the mace, although many of his followers are satisfied with a stout club or staff.

HOLY TEXTS

The clergy of Saint Cuthbert holds few holy texts in high regard. Most are simple affairs, written so they can be easily understood by the laymen or illustrated for the illiterate. The church also considers the *Parables of the Wise Fool* to be in accordance with the god's teachings, although they are not officially church lore.

Saint Cuthbert and Common Sense: This short book (usually no more than thirty handwritten pages) sums up the teachings of the Cuthbertine faith in simple language. While some parts are open to interpretation, the essence of the book is that every person knows in his heart he should obey the law, be good, and use common sense. If he fails in one of those things he should turn to others in his community for advice and support, relying on revelatory prayer if there is any confusion. The faithful don't put much stock in wasting time creating gilded pages or calligraphic manuscripts, so most books are copied by hand using easy-to-read letters. A few include simple drawings to help illustrate scenes or to hold the attention of illiterates.

Tales of the Vulgar Fool: This book is called "the blasphemous book" by mainstream members of the church, as it takes the innocent stories of the Wise Fool and alters or corrupts them into lechery and self-interest. For example, instead of a story where the Wise Fool gets the better of a cruel farmer, the Fool steals from the farmer and sleeps with his wife. Many of the stories take a more "thumb in your eye" approach to the traditional tales, having the Wise Fool be an agent of punishment or misfortune rather than just teaching a moral lesson. A very small number of Cuthbertines take this sort of thing to heart and pepper their daily lives with these "teachings," and it is this sort of heresy the Stars try to squelch. Most outside the church see these tales as a humorous poke at the uptight Cuthbertines, but those in the church see it as distortion of their beliefs.



Cuthbertine communities usually have a few simple laws and rely on the common sense of the clergy to deal with special cases such as these. They never allow themselves to get bogged down with dozens of contradictory rules, technicalities, and loopholes, and as such their overall system is tough but fair.

Saint Cuthbert's typical appearance is that of a common yokel or a white-haired, mustached man wearing plate mail, although he has taken many forms in various parables. He does this to convince the listener to hear his words and never to play jokes or cause confusion. He usually carries a stout bronzewood cudgel, and in the stories this is usually how his faithful recognize him. When geared for battle, he brings his eponymous mace (an item he sometimes leaves on the Material Plane for mortals to find and use against great evil) and his platinum and ruby medallion. In art, he is usually shown as a white-haired man with a mustache, crumpled hat, medallion, and cudgel.

Saint Cuthbert is not interested in grand ceremonies honoring him—he would rather devote such time and resources to converting the layfolk and providing needed services to the faithful. Because of this, he has a few large cathedrals and a larger number of farmhouse-style temples (often a converted barn or the residence of a retired priest), but most locations dedicated to him are simple shrines, often built by the roadside and tended by the community. Some large city buildings have a shrine built into an exterior alcove, especially those on high-traffic streets or bordering areas where passersby might need his protection (such as near a dangerous part of town or near a city gate). The larger temples tend to collect interesting and valuable items brought by adventurers, but otherwise the church has little interest in grand decorations and ostentatious displays. Worship services include singing, prayers, reciting parables, and sharing simple food (traditionally bread, milk, and gruel).

Saint Cuthbert's three symbols are a crumpled hat, a simple wooden billet, and a starburst. All three are tied to his appearance but have a practical aspect as well. The hat represents his own hat, a common man's well-worn head covering, good for keeping off the rain or sun and even useful as a pillow. The billet (usually of oak or bronzewood) represents the billet of wood he carries, whether for use in the makings of a campfire or in knocking sense into a stubborn skull. The starburst is his medallion, which represents purity of heart and purpose. Although the vast majority of his worshipers are common people who will never own magic items, his adventuring followers prefer these kinds of items (hats, bludgeons, and medallions) over all others. Holy symbols are muted in design and have utilitarian purpose, as it makes no sense worrying about dirtying or damaging a fancy hat or walking stick when the time comes

to crack a few heads in the name of law and good. Priests of the order of the star often adorn their holy symbols with tiny gemstones they acquire over time (whether donations from parishioners or found while questing), but even these gaudier elements are just a way for the cleric to carry wealth that is easy to distribute when necessary, such as by donating a few gems to a struggling community or paying an especially stubborn monster to relocate to a wilder territory.

A CLERIC'S ROLE

Every cleric belongs to one of the church's three orders. The orders are friendly to each other and recognize the value of one another. In times of need they support each other fully, such as a group of traveling chapeaux assisting a rural billet with a task too great to handle alone. Acolytes learn the responsibilities of all three orders, spending time with mentors from each, and choose one order to join when ordained. It is possible to change orders, although this is discouraged as it shows a weakness of faith, as most acolytes spend much of their pre-ordination prayers seeking guidance and insight as to which order calls to them the strongest.

The chapeaux are the source of most of the stereotypes of the faith: zealous, hardheaded, and preachy. Their job is to convert "heathens" to the faith, telling people of the wisdom and glory of Saint Cuthbert, out-shouting rival priests, and even roughing up troublemakers to endear themselves to local people. A chapeaux in appropriate circumstances should expect to preach a sermon at least once per day, usually followed by giving out loaves of bread (used as an incentive for people to stay and listen, but also as a way to help the needy). If a sermon takes hold and a listener expresses interest in the faith, the cleric should spend at least an hour talking with that person, giving her more information and guide her to seek out others of the faith (usually a local billet) for further teaching. Most adventuring clerics are chapeaux, doing good deeds in the name of Saint Cuthbert to attract people to his name, while punctuating their city and town visits with sermons to the layfolk. Chapeaux have no standardized garb except for a crumpled hat. Most train in public speaking and develop a good eye for separating honest converts from those just looking for a handout. Approximately one-third of Saint Cuthbert's clerics are chapeaux.

The billets have a more protective and parental role than the chapeaux, and someone raised in a Cuthbertine village often has fond memories of his local chaplain, usually a tough but caring individual working hard to serve the spiritual needs of his community (although these bumpkins are usually in for a shock when they enter the greater world and see how outsiders react to those of the faith). Billets are the healers and sheriffs of small communities, more than willing to get their hands dirty when one of their flock needs assistance. Unlike some other faiths where priests live off tithes, billets do honest work, helping run a family farm or ranch, tending an orchard, or performing other traditional professions in addition to their supernatural duties. This dual role goes far to endear the billet to his community—it is hard to disagree with a cleric's doctrine of hard work and common sense if he pitches in as much the next person. Many billets enter the clergy as part of a family tradition, with the second child becoming a cleric. Most of these return to their communities as billets, although a small number join another order. Adventuring billets are rare, as they prefer to stay close to their home communities, although some of them travel farther in the interest of acquiring income or unearthing the source of a larger problem plaguing

APHORISMS

The common, everyday sayings of the faithful speak a great deal about their attitude and general outlook. The clerics of Saint Cuthbert make good use of such adages, as their common use can have great impact on the people.

I may be a fool, but I am a wise fool. Taken from the *Parables of the Wise Fool*, this phrase is often used as a rebuttal to anyone who disparages Cuthbertine thinking as foolish or backwater. It is a polite way for the speaker to defend himself from abusive talk yet acknowledge that he realizes he is being insulted. Usually this is the last warning before the speaker decides he has had enough and it is time to knock some sense into the insulting party.

Spread the word, strengthen the heart. Used mainly by the Chapeaux, this phrase is also used at the close of general prayers or as a farewell, expressing a hope that the Cudgel's teachings reaches others and create a better world for all. Some clerics like to chant it while healing, using it to focus their will.

Use your common sense. This phrase and others like it (such as "use the good sense the gods gave a mule") essentially mean the same thing: that the listener needs to stop what they're doing and think for a moment, as what they're doing is foolish, inefficient, or outright dangerous. This phrase is also used by those outside the church, but as common sense is part of Saint Cuthbert's doctrine it is clearly a Cuthbertine saying.

their home territories. Their traditional colors are brown and russet, but they normally dress in typical clothes for their mundane work and put on their special garb for religious ceremonies. Billets tend to have more practical knowledge (carpentry, blacksmithing, healing, and so on) than scholarly or adventuring knowledge. About two-thirds of the clergy are billets, and three-fourths of them are lawful good.

The order of the stars is the smallest order within the church, numbering less than one in a hundred priests. They are responsible for keeping the word of the god true and untainted among mortals by rooting out heretics and fringe beliefs. Very few people ever encounter a star, for while they are not a secret organization within the church, most people outside the church have no reason to interact with them. Stars investigate, track, and detain anyone they see as a threat to the purity of the faith. Although they primarily focus on other Cuthbertines, they also combat rumors and falsehoods spread about the faith. For example, an evil cult might arouse suspicion among townsfolk with stories that a new Cuthbertine settlement's prosperity is due to kidnapping children and drinking their blood. The stars would find the cultists and mend the relations between the locals and the Cuthbertines. When not pursuing heresy, stars perform the same duties as chapeaux. They are comfortable acting alone or in disguise but equally capable of operating in groups, often with a cadre of chapeaux. A star's home base is usually a large temple, although members travel far and are familiar with many smaller temples in remote areas. Official garb for a star is a dark green robe with a holy symbol of copper, gold, or platinum studded with red gems (preferably rubies). This formalized clothing leads many outside the church to believe the stars are the leaders of the church hierarchy, although this is not the case. Because of their experience dealing with heretical clerics, they tend to be skilled at battling spellcasters, and when the church must go to war it is the stars who instruct the clergy on magical tactics.

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IUZ THE OLD

Iuz is an evil demigod, said to be the son of the demon lord Graz'zt and the mortal witch Iggwilv. Originally just a powerful cambion (half-fiend), he somehow got a foothold on godhood and now controls a large territory north of the Free City of Greyhawk. He is the god of deceit, pain, oppression, and evil and plans to eventually take over all of Oerth. His appearance is that of a shriveled old man or a huge demonic-looking creature, although he can take many forms and has been known to impersonate mortals, demons, and gods alike to gain worshipers and magical power. Due to his goals and past disputes he hates Saint Cuthbert, Boccob's servant-god Zagyg, Vecna (who once used him as a living vessel), and the City of Greyhawk. His symbol is a grinning skull. Because he lives on the Material Plane, he has a powerful and direct influence on his church, resulting in rampant fanaticism.

He teaches that the weak must be exploited, tortured, and stripped of hope, and the strong must be wary of betrayal by their underlings. Inflicting pain on others demonstrates power and defying Iuz guarantees absolute pain. His favored weapon is the greatsword (although his clerics often use maces or staves) and his domains are Chaos, Evil, Suffering, and Trickery. Suffering was a recent addition to his domains and can be found in the *Spell Compendium*.

Iuz's clerics practice torture, often hunting paladins and unicorns as prizes for fame within the church and trying to outdo each other in acts of cruelty and evil. They enjoy creating evil magic items and mundane items that cause unnecessary pain, traveling the world for the opportunity to test their creations on innocent victims. As their religion is banned in most civilized lands, they must travel in secret or hide their true natures, and these clerics are responsible for many mysterious evil cults that spring up in otherwise peaceful lands. The highest levels of Iuz's church are the Boneshadow (six spies who run his information network) and the Boneheart (two tiers of six wizard or cleric advisors).

Regardless of their order, clerics of Saint Cuthbert speak their minds plainly. They do not suffer fools and disapprove of those who backslide in faith. Honesty and common sense are more valuable than scholarly knowledge, and practicality is more favorable than splendor. All clerics learn how to fight (some of them preferring bare knuckles to weapons) and keep themselves physically fit, as sloth shows a lack of discipline contrary to the god's teachings. Note that while Saint Cuthbert's clerics may choose the Destruction domain, spells from that domain are dangerous and are only used to punish the wicked or those guilty of serious crimes against the church.

RELATIONS WITH OTHER CORE RELIGIONS

With his hard-line stance on following the rules, Saint Cuthbert has little tolerance for actively chaotic deities such as Olidammara or even the good-aligned elven deities. He is gruffly tolerant of neutral good beings as long as they "do their jobs" and don't interfere with his interests; he knows he can call upon Pelor or Ehlonna despite their "faults." His closest ally is Rao, a gentle lawful good god of peace and reason, someone whom he sees as an older brother and shoulder to lean on when he needs a bit of rest (some speculate Rao orchestrated Saint Cuthbert's arrival on Oerth, much as Pelor brought his paladin-champion Mayaheine to serve as his general). One unusual conflict is with Pholtus, a solar and lunar deity of inflexible law; he and Saint Cuthbert have never seen eye to eye and their followers often come to blows after heated arguments, although never to the point of death.

Saint Cuthbert despises evil in all forms and never backs down when it rears its ugly head, although he leaves the active campaigns against evil to martial deities such as Heironeous. He particularly despises Iuz and Vecna, seeing them as the opposition to his own ideals of law and goodness; he has physically clashed with Iuz on the Material Plane on more than one occasion, and expects he might have to do so with Vecna now that the Arch-Lich has returned.

A PALADIN'S ROLE

Paladins belong to the same orders as clerics, and in roughly the same proportions. Given their more martial abilities, paladins frequent more dangerous places than clerics. Paladin chapeaux work in frontier areas, preaching to the independent-spirited folk who whittle away at the edges of the wilderness or starting crusades to forcibly convert evil-natured monsters to worship of the Cudgel using a "tough love" approach to save endangered souls. Paladin billets are often the third child in a religious family, supporting their sibling cleric with muscle and a faith that blazes like a star. Larger communities might have a billet cleric leading religious services and a billet paladin dealing with troublemakers and monster attacks. Paladin stars are only slightly less common than their clerical counterparts, sworn to unearth heresy and smite evil in all its forms, making them the most likely to embark on great quests. In many cases paladins are the intermediaries between the clerics and the layfolk and heathens, using their superior charisma to bend ears and turn hesitant hearts. Paladins dress in the same manner as clerics, although they prefer wearing some kind of armor most of the time—even just a chain shirt or a breastplate—just in case they need to leap into battle when a demon or necromancer makes a surprise appearance.

HOLIDAYS

Saint Cuthbert has few holidays, and all those celebrated by his faithful are public affairs that involve the people of the community.

Saint Cuthbert's Day: This is the largest annual festival celebrated by the church, taking place on the 4th of Growfest (a week-long spring holiday). At dawn, local worshipers and pilgrims gather outside a town or city (usually at the southern entrance) and then march in a procession, chanting and singing along a major road until they reach a central temple or shrine. Children of the faith strike at the worshipers with green switches in a ritual called "the cleansing," said to represent the problems in life the faithful must surmount and the discipline to persevere through them. The children engage in this activity with great gusto, and while it is officially reserved for those of the faith, other children sometimes join in. Those in the procession stoically tolerate catcalls and other comments from unbelievers, but rotten fruit, other thrown objects, or overt violence against the faithful quickly makes them turn on their attackers, who then face a serious beating (in most years this does not occur, as past retaliations have shown observers the limits to what the Cuthbertines are willing to tolerate). At the temple or shrine, the ranking cleric brings out a replica of the mace of Cuthbert and the faithful have a great feast from noon until dusk, with the weapon as the centerpiece. From sundown until midnight they have a bonfire, which the followers believe can remove curses and other misfortune (by braving the heat but not actually taking a burn).

Breadgiving Day: This holiday falls on the 4th of Needfest (a midwinter month). Although conceived as an event to feed refugees from the Greyhawk Wars, it has grown to encompass helping the hungry by sharing loaves of bread. Cuthbertines use this opportunity to preach to the layfolk, hoping to gain converts. The followers of Pelor and Rao also participate in this holiday, and in groups with multiple faiths the followers of Saint Cuthbert provide security, prevent fighting, and maintain orderly lines. Unfortunately, sometimes Cuthbertines get into verbal conflicts or even fistfights with members of rival faiths (such as Pholtus, or the liberty god Tritherion) about which group is the most benign, which greatly amuses observers.

THREE MYTHS

Myths and parables play a strong role in the sermons of Saint Cuthbert's flock. The following three are just a small sample.

The Saint Among Us: This abbreviated tale tells of the mortal shepherd Cuthbert who led a simple and honorable life, teaching by example and helping common folk in need. After years of service and zealous effort, the powers of good awarded him great blessings and guided him to Oerth, where he walked as a holy man. Eventually, his fame and power grew so great the gods of Oerth had to accept him as one of their own. Although this limited his ability to directly intervene in the mortal world, it expanded his reach so he could touch the hearts and minds of countless souls. The church uses this myth to teach that the power of Saint Cuthbert comes not from an external source but from the interior will to act in an orderly and good manner, that common sense is a source of strength independent of magic or divinity, and that by acting in according to what is good and right you can accomplish great things. Cuthbert the mortal made himself a god with hard work and zealous devotion to his goals, so any man or woman with the necessary will can overcome adversity.

Parables of the Wise Fool: These stories involve a perceptive but unschooled man who uses folk wisdom to solve problems and show up arrogant city folk who try to educate people in "better ways of doing things." The parables involve agriculture, animal husbandry, marital problems, the rearing of children, craftsmanship, dealing with wild beasts, fighting, and other things important to the common man. In each case the Wise Fool (usually a young or middle-aged man wearing a crumpled hat) is only a fool in the eyes of a well-meaning antagonist and actually wins the day because he relies on common sense rather than strange newfangled ideas. Many of the religion's sayings come from the Wise Fool, and while the myths are not official scripture they are clearly derived from Cuthbert's teachings. High priests agree they were written centuries ago by a Cuthbert-worshiper with a knack for stories. The church uses them as teaching tools, and simple paintings of the Wise Fool decorate many Cuthbertine buildings, especially rural ones, and small well-worn illustrated chapbooks of his stories pass from family to family within a community. It is not uncommon for an artistic member of the faith in need of service from the church to trade for it by illustrating one or more parables as a mural or in a portable form. Giving an entire book of the parables is a precious gift, and depending on the quality might be worth an entire dowry.

The Boy Who Cried Wolf: This myth probably originated from the god's home plane, as the oldest written records of it use odd phrases and an unusual sentence structure, as if translated word for word from a foreign tongue. It tells of a shepherd boy who amuses himself by calling out that a

PHOLTUS

Pholtus is a rival deity to Saint Cuthbert, similarly benign but convinced his way is the most correct and any who believe otherwise are dangerous heretics. He represents light, law, order, inflexibility, resolution, the sun, and the moons, and is informally the god of the night sky. His moniker "of the Blinding Light" reflects his attitude and that of his church—that his power is the true source that blinds a viewer to all distractions or contrary opinions. He is shown as a tall, slender man in a white robe, with fair skin and hair and eyes that shine with the fires of devotion, carrying an ivory staff topped by a sun-disk. His symbol is a full moon partially eclipsed by a crescent moon. Like Saint Cuthbert, he opposes all chaotic deities, but his authoritarian stance makes him unpopular with most other gods.

The church of Pholtus teaches that the One True Way is a strict path, but guarantees rightness. The faithful should show no tolerance for those who do not give all for the cause of Law, for fanaticism in the name of the Blinding Light is praiseworthy. Their anthem is "O Blinding Light." The church has three tiers (Glimmering, wearing white; Gleaming, wearing white and silver; and Shining, wearing white, silver, and gold). His favored weapon is the quarterstaff. His domains are Good, Knowledge, Law, and Sun. As with Saint Cuthbert, he is a lawful good deity with strong lawful neutral tendencies, and there are no neutral good clerics in his church.

Unlike Saint Cuthbert's orders, with delegated powers, all clerics of Pholtus are responsible for bringing the Light to unbelievers, brooking no arguments against this practice. They travel far in search of people to convert, usually in groups to protect themselves from violent nonbelievers. His clerics smite chaos where they find it and evil once chaos is rooted out. They get along well with conservative paladins, and many serve as judges, lawyers, and arbiters. Most Pholtans come from the Theocracy of the Pale, a country where worshiping Pholtus is the state religion.

wolf is attacking his flock, but when the villagers arrive to help it turns out he was lying. After three false alarms they ignore his cries for help when a wolf actually attacks, and he loses his flock. In some variants the wolf also kills the boy, or the wolf is actually an orc or some other monster that eventually attacks the village. The church uses this myth to stress honesty, as lies can harm not only yourself but also those you care for, and discipline, as a good person should be able to complete his duties without complaint or distracting others.

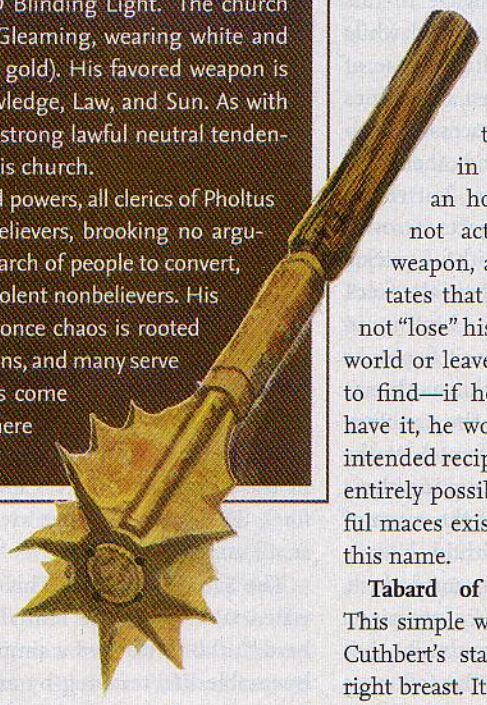
PRESTIGE CLASS SUGGESTIONS

Members of all three holy orders are likely to choose specialized classes that focus on destroying chaos and evil, and might become abolishers (*Lords of Madness*, 182) or justiciars (*Complete Warrior*, 47). Chapeaux tend to go for aggressive-conversion classes such as divine crusader (*Complete Divine*, 33) or evangelist (*Complete Divine*, 39), but many enjoy the simplicity of punching a backtalking heathen in the mouth and become streetfighters (*Complete Adventurer*, 79). Those of the order of the star tend to become church inquisitors (*Complete Divine*, 26) and billets often become hospitalers (*Complete Divine*, 48).

RELICS OF THE FAITH

The clergy of Saint Cuthbert view most relics as tools to be used, not as items to be kept carefully protected. As such, most of them are worn weapons and armor.

Mace of Saint Cuthbert: This bronzewood *+5 disruption holy lawful heavy mace* is the personal weapon of the god, and he sometimes lends it to great mortal heroes (although he can recall it to himself at any time, even across planar barriers). The mace has other powers (such as the ability to cast *searing light* at will), sometimes varying with each time he sends it to Oerth. Several lesser versions of this item exist, crafted by church blacksmiths over the past centuries (typically *+1 holy* or *+1 axiomatic heavy maces*). Some believe that any weapon of this type discovered in the world is merely an homage to the original, not actually the god's own weapon, as common sense dictates that Saint Cuthbert would not "lose" his weapon in the mortal world or leave it around for anyone to find—if he wanted someone to have it, he would just give it to the intended recipient. If this is true, it is entirely possible that several powerful maces exist in the world bearing this name.



Tabard of the Great Crusade: This simple white tabard bears Saint Cuthbert's starburst symbol on the right breast. It was once worn by Mar the Barehanded, a great paladin of the stars who discovered a heretical Cuthbertine cult and forced them all to convert to the proper teachings of the faith or face his wrath. In the four years it took to eradicate the cult (by conversion and killing), Mar saved the lives of dozens of church heroes and inspired thousands more to join the cause. He died an old man in his bed and was buried with his armor and tabard, but his tomb was later defiled and looted by the church of Nerull, and most believe the item is still in their possession somewhere. The wearer of the tabard can cast *daylight* and *prayer* once per day, *cure minor wounds* twenty

times per day, and gains a +5 natural armor bonus. It slowly cleans itself over time, becoming pristine and white again in at most 24 hours from when it was dirtied. It counts as a shirt for the purpose of magic item spaces on the body.

NEW DIVINE SPELLS

Rather than devoting time and energy to strange and exotic spells, the church of Saint Cuthbert has a few variants of common spells, most of which are restricted to use by one particular order.

Banner of the Saint

Enchantment (Compulsion) [Mind-Affecting]
Level: Cleric 3 (Saint Cuthbert)
Components: V, S, DF, F
Casting Time: 1 round
Range: Banner touched
Effect: 60-ft.-radius emanation centered on the banner
Duration: 1 minute
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: Yes

You create an aura of power centered on a banner bearing Saint Cuthbert's symbol or likeness. All allies within the aura gain a +2 morale bonus on attack rolls and saving throws against fear effects. The spell ends if the cloth of the banner is destroyed or touches the ground.

Focus: The banner and a small blessed cloth worth 100 gp.

Persuasive Oration

Enchantment (Charm) [Mind-Affecting]
Level: Cleric 1 (Saint Cuthbert, billet only)
Components: V, S, DF
Casting Time: 1 round
Duration: 10 minutes/level

This spell functions like *charm person* except as noted above.

Saint Cuthbert's Cudgel

Conjuration (Creation)
Level: Cleric 1 (Saint Cuthbert, chapeaux only)
Target: One touched nonmagical oak or bronzewood club or quarterstaff

This spell functions like *shillelagh* except as noted above.

Unearth Heresy

Divination [Mind-Affecting]
Level: Cleric 2 (Saint Cuthbert, star only)

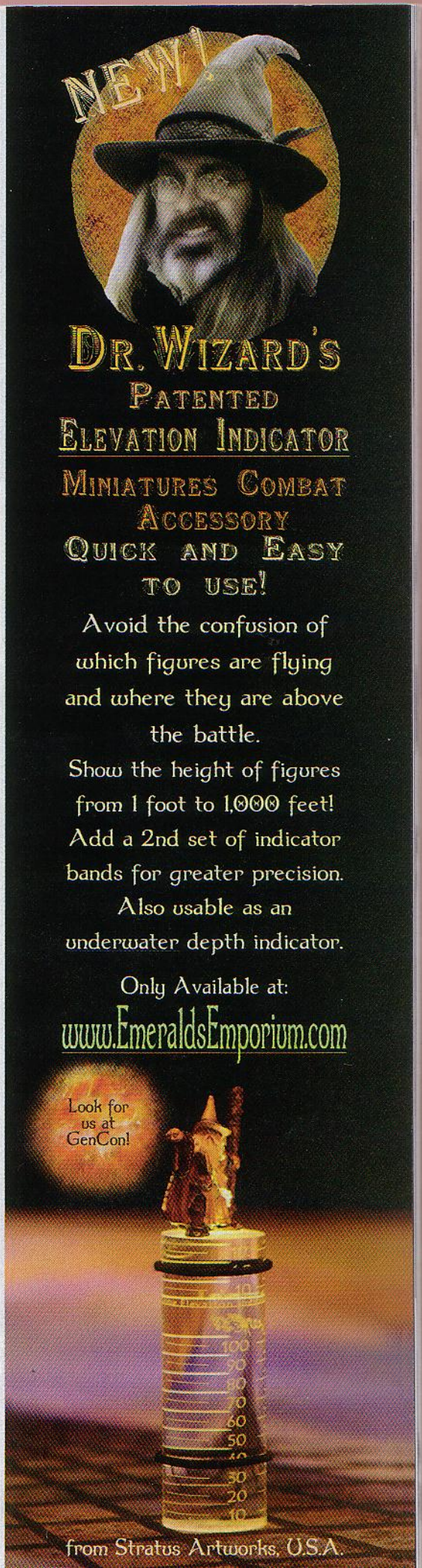
This spell functions like *detect thoughts* except as noted above.

NPC CONTACTS FOR CLERICS OF THIS RELIGION

Clerics of Saint Cuthbert can always call on the help of their fellow clergymen when in need. While such requests might not always be granted, appropriate aid is always given when possible.

Talasek Thraydin (LG male human paladin 9 of Saint Cuthbert) is a member of the billets and a friend to all the needy in the City of Greyhawk. He has dedicated his life to helping the unfortunate and has a wide network of friends and acquaintances in the city who help him provide food, lodging, work, and information. He works out of the city's temple and is always happy to speak with anyone interested in similar projects. He is honored by the church and respected by adventurers for leading the charge to wipe out a cult cell of Iuz hiding in the city, and many young paladins of all faiths look up to him for his friendly demeanor and obvious charity.

Talasek (or "Tal" to his friends) is tall, with sandy blond hair, lightly tanned skin from days in the sun, ruddy cheeks, and brown eyes. In battle, he wears +3 *full plate* and carries a *frost brand*, but otherwise just dresses in plain clothes and a pale tabard and carries a simple wooden club. He knows his way around the Free City of Greyhawk and isn't afraid to go into the more dangerous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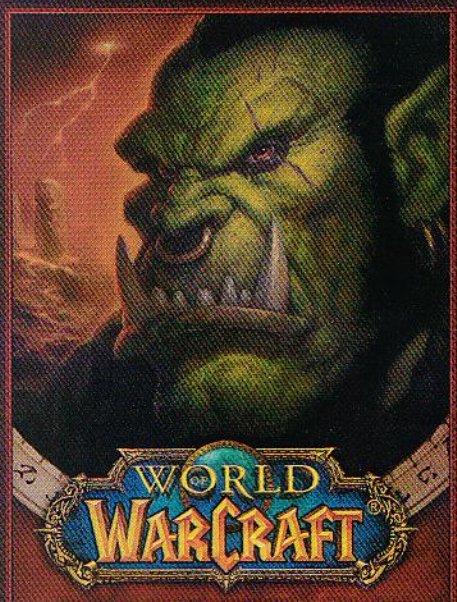

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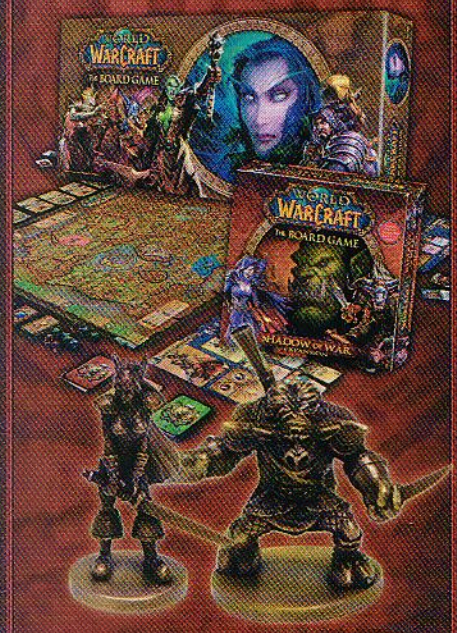

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CUSTOMIZED SUMMON LIST

As Saint Cuthbert is a lawful good deity, his clerics cannot summon chaotic creatures with their summoning spells. They do, however, have other creatures on their summoning list suitable for their ethos (all clerics of Saint Cuthbert know the necessary words to summon the following creatures with their *summon monster* spells). Saint Cuthbert is also unusual as, if one of his clerics uses a *gate*, he may personally step through in a diminished form to deal with whatever enemy is at hand, especially if it is a powerful minion of Iuz or the evil deity himself (although, as mentioned earlier, the powers of Balance make him pay by allowing evil a similar direct intervention at a later time).

Summon Monster III

Celestial heavy horse (LG)

Summon Monster IV

Celestial blink dog (LG)

Summon Monster IX

Golden protector* (celestial half-dragon lamassu, often seen with a bull-like body rather than a lion-like body)

* This creature has the extraplanar subtype but otherwise has the normal statistics for a creature of its kind.

areas (partly because he is confident and partly because even the thieves appreciate his efforts). He hasn't traveled more than a few days from the city but knows how to build a stone wall, frame a door, dig a latrine, milk a cow, and pluck a chicken. He sometimes walks a beat with the Guild of Night Watchmen (a citizen's organization made to keep the peace at night when the city guards are unavailable).

Tal is a good contact for low-level adventurers who need a mentor or guide, especially if they're new to the city and get into trouble with local ruffians (who most likely clear out if Tal shows up). He can also be an ally for mid-level adventurers, pitching in on a quest against evil when they could use some extra muscle or healing.

Kaven the Stout (LG male human cleric 5 of Saint Cuthbert) is a chapeaux and is exactly what most people expect when they think of a cleric of the Cudgel. Gruff, burly, and stubborn, he likes to go to the center of town and harangue people about their flaws and how converting to Saint Cuthbert's faith will solve all their problems. Of course, this is not the most efficient method and he ends up getting into a lot of fistfights, which he enjoys. Kaven's superiors know his brute-force tactics usually don't work and he will eventually have a crisis of faith, but they plan to be there to help him through it. He is a distant relative of the cleric-leader of Veluna (a theocratic country that worships Rao) and can take advantage of this in an emergency. Kaven means well, he just doesn't understand he is not a good communicator.

Kaven is of middle height, with light brown skin tanned to a rich brown, dark eyes, and dark hair. He wears chainmail when traveling but shucks it on hot days to preach in a common man's shirt, always with his order's crumpled hat. He carries a heavy mace but not a shield, as he believes "the best defense is a good offense." He is a skilled laborer and can do simple craft tasks such as helping a peddler repair a cart wheel, as that gives him an hour to

preach to the peddler while fixing the wheel.

Kaven is a good low-level contact for adventurers who need help on a quest, especially if there is a cleric or paladin of a different faith in the group, as he will try to explain to them why Saint Cuthbert is superior (but eventually is at a loss for words and challenges his opponent to a fistfight). He is a good cohort for a more experienced cleric or paladin of Saint Cuthbert—someone to mold into a better person.

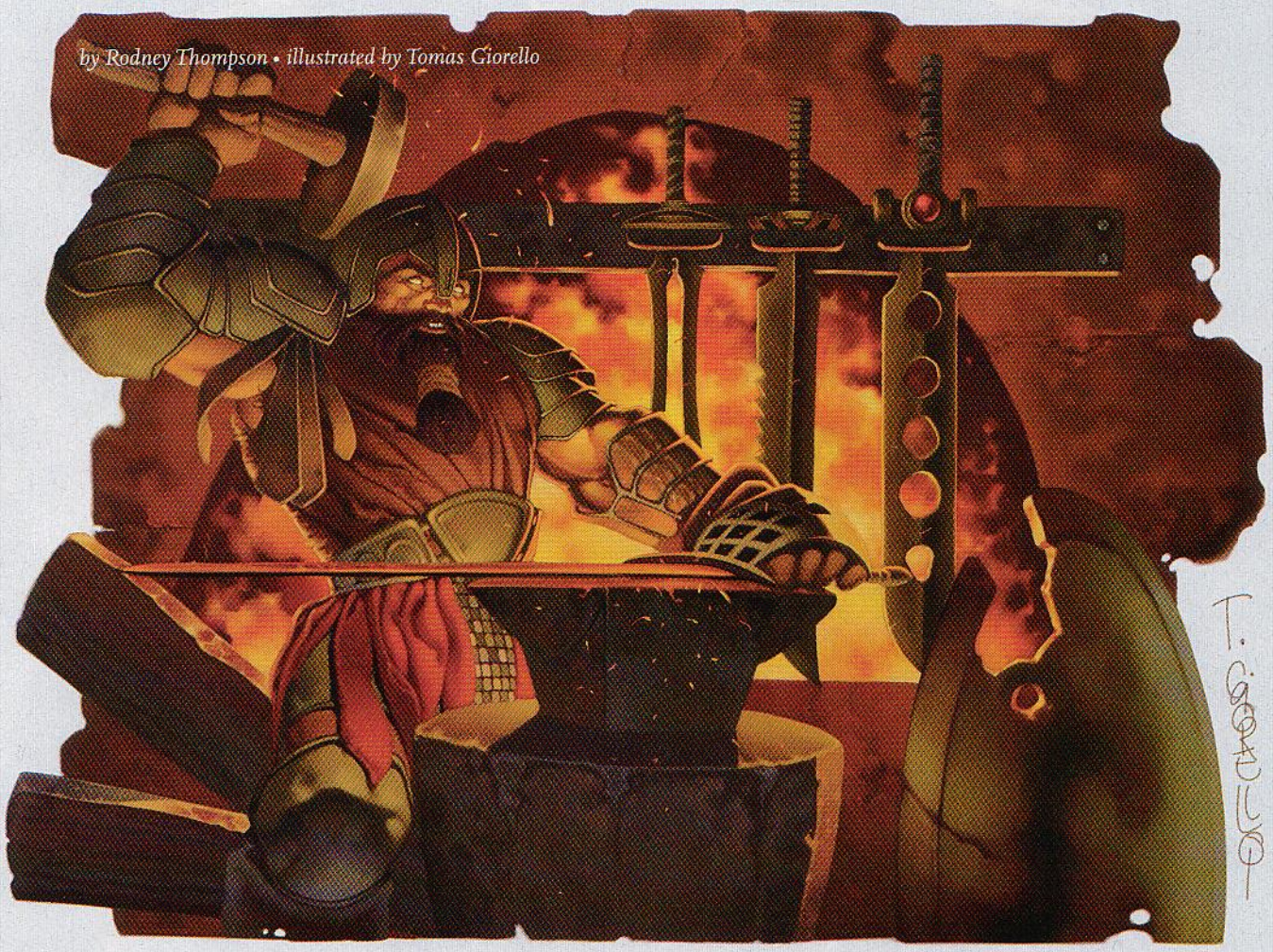
PLANAR ALLY

Believed to be the elevated soul of a long-dead Cuthbertine priestess, the astral deva known as Granny Mur is a defender of the innocent and good, cantankerous but affectionate, with a short temper when it comes to disobedience and cruelty. She looks like an old but tough human woman, leaning on a thick wooden cane that doubles as a bludgeon, with a friendly look on her careworn face. Her appearance is a bit shabby, like a wise elder woman living on the fringe of a community, offset only by her autumn-colored cloak. A visible aura of power surrounds her but she can dampen this at will to appear wholly mortal. She has wings but usually does not manifest them (although the inside of her cloak is patterned like feathers).

Granny Mur has all the abilities of a lawful good astral deva (her cane is actually her magical mace) and can conjure small quantities of nourishing bread, cow's milk, and sugar candies at will, which she normally uses to help extremely needy communities or reward well-behaved children. She has the Combat Expertise feat instead of Cleave. She never appears on Oerth in any form other than that of an old woman, although she can change shape like any deva. She knows how to run a farm and ranch, deliver babies, do simple carpentry, weave, tan, skin, and dozens of other practical skills (rather than three areas of in-depth knowledge, she has reasonable knowledge in many areas). She gladly teaches what she knows to anyone who asks respectfully. She only enters combat when facing great evil (particularly demons, devils, and undead), preferring roles where she can defend others, heal, or aid an escape. She never acts like she is better than someone else—just more experienced. Regardless of her target's age, she is fond of saying, "I've been around a long time and seen things you've never seen, but you're still young. Give it time."

Granny Mur only accepts items she or a Cuthbertine community would fine useful; she has no need for magical swords or fiery wands, but a *decanter of endless water*, *Keoghtom's ointment*, or *lyre of building* puts a sparkle in her eye. If paid with money she only accepts copper and silver, as it is easier to distribute in a poor community without upsetting the economy. She also collects payment in service, which might range from a quest to destroy monsters bothering a town to something as mundane as helping build a bridge or dam that would benefit a Cuthbertine settlement; a week of mundane service is worth about 1,000 gp to her. She is unusual in that she lets less experienced clerics call her (using *lesser planar ally*) and pay her in advance with items, money, or services, so if summoned later with *planar ally* she can help them immediately. Many of Cuthbert's clerics and paladins are familiar with her even at low levels because she frequently arranges to be an intermediary for their spellcasting prayers.

by Rodney Thompson • illustrated by Tomas Giorello



Master's Forge

Crafting Legends

In many tales both legendary and fantastic, heroes and villains alike seek out revered craftsmen in order to obtain weapons of great quality and make. The last descendent of a line of kings takes his throne only after receiving a weapon re-forged by elven craftsmen. A vengeful bride enlists the aid of a retired swordmaker, forcing him to break a promise he made to himself, in order to procure a blade intended to slay those who nearly killed her. These stories are not unique, but they do represent a common theme in epic storytelling: a tool can be equally as legendary as the hero or villain who wields it.

The reason such legendary heroes seek out these talented craftsmen is because the items they create are unique in some way. Perhaps a blacksmith in a remote mountain village is renowned for creating extraordinarily durable maces or a dwarven armorsmith who lives in a major city creates armor specifically designed for spellcasters. In order to create this aspect of storytelling in your game, this article offers a new system by which craftsmen are able to create amazing weapons and armor fitting of their own place in legend. Using this system, each craftsman becomes unique, so that every item he creates bears a unique signature, identifying the item as one of that craftsman's manufacture.

Basic Mechanics

The system of custom item creation presented here revolves around adding new special item qualities to

weapons and armor produced by a particular craftsman. Both player characters and NPCs can make use of this system simply by putting ranks in a specific Craft skill and taking the Artisan Craftsman feat (see sidebar).

In order to apply a special item quality to a crafted item, the item must be crafted with the masterwork component. Each item quality modifies the cost and Craft DC of the masterwork component in some way. Whenever a craftsman creates a masterwork item, he may select any number of item qualities to add, each one modifying the cost and Craft DC of the masterwork component in turn. The chosen item qualities are imbued when the masterwork component is crafted.

Artisan Craftsman [General]

Your craftsmanship is unique, imprinting every item you create with your signature style.

Prerequisite: Craft (armorsmithing, bowmaking, or weaponsmithing) 4 ranks.

Benefit: Choose one of the following Craft skills in which you have at least 4 ranks: armorsmithing, bowmaking, or weaponsmithing. Whenever you craft a masterwork item using the chosen skill, you may apply any or all of the item qualities you know to the item.

You know one item quality plus one additional item quality per 5 ranks in the chosen skill, to a maximum of five item qualities at 20 ranks. Once you select an item quality you may not exchange it later for a different one.

Special: You can gain this feat multiple times. Its effects do not stack. Each time you take the feat, it applies to a different Craft skill.

New Item Qualities

The following new item qualities can be added to any qualifying suit of armor or weapon, modifying the masterwork component accordingly.

Acid Washed

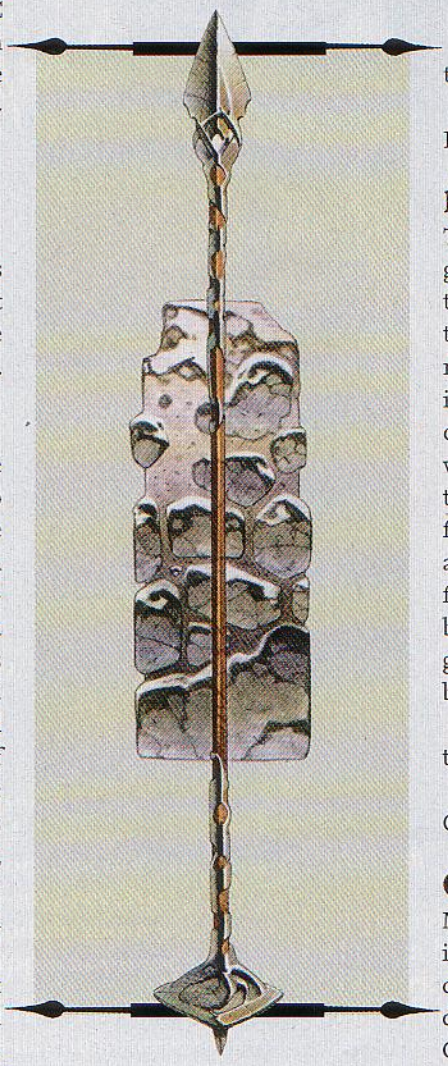
Swords made from two or more metals are acid washed in order to bring out the contrast in appearance between the two metals. Although typically performed on bladed weapons, some experimental craftsmen have attempted to mimic the process with other metal weapons and armor. Acid washing creates elaborate and beautiful patterns on the surface of the weapon. Items created with the acid washed quality gain a +4 bonus on saving throws made against acid, rust, or disintegration.

Restriction: May only be applied to metal weapons and armor.

Additional Cost: +100 gp (light and weapons), +200 gp (medium and heavy); +5 to Craft DC of masterwork component.

Basket Hilt

A basket hilt is an elaborate guard piece that serves to protect the hand holding the sword against attacks. Basket hilts come in many forms, from a nearly solid curved shield of metal to an elaborate woven pattern. Regardless of its appearance, a basket hilt grants a +4 bonus on opposed attack rolls made to resist disarm attempts.



Restriction: May only be applied to swords.

Additional Cost: +50 gp; +3 to Craft DC of masterwork component.

Blood Groove

The fuller, also known as the blood groove, is a furrow that travels down the length of the blade from the hilt to just before the tip, designed to reduce the weight of the blade and increase its strength. This allows the craftsman to create a lighter blade without diminishing the strength of the weapon, a process difficult to perfect but, when successful, produces a weapon both strong and light. The fuller reduces weight of the weapon by 20%, or 1/2 pound, whichever is greater, and increase the Hardness by +2.

Restriction: May only be applied to swords.

Additional Cost: +100 gp; +5 to Craft DC of masterwork component.

Caster Armor

Most common in magic-rich societies, some armorsmiths specialize in creating suits of armor specifically designed to the needs of spellcasters. Craftsmen occasionally create more flexible armor that allows for the complicated movements of somatic components. A suit of armor with this item quality reduces the chance of arcane spell failure by 5%, making it easier for a caster to wear without interrupting spellcasting.

Restriction: May only be applied to armor with an arcane spell failure chance.

Additional Cost: +400 gp (light), +800 gp (medium), +1,000 gp (heavy); +7 to Craft DC of masterwork component.

Deceptive

Although the technique is frowned upon by many, especially law-abiding citizens and city guards, some craftsmen perfect the technique of making a weapon look like another item entirely. For instance, a bow might be made to slide into a wooden container that resembles a walking stick, or a sword and its sheath might appear as a cane. A deceptive weapon grants its bearer a +4 circumstance bonus on Sleight of Hand checks made to hide or otherwise disguise the weapon.

Restriction: May only be applied to weapons.

Additional Cost: +800 gp; +7 to Craft DC of masterwork component.

Enhanced Bracing

Weaponsmiths in areas with large, open terrain frequently learn to create spears and polearms specifically designed to withstand a charge from mounted cavalry or raging opponents. These weapons use special bases designed to dig into the ground, in order to prevent the weapon from becoming dislodged when striking a charging foe. A weapon with this item quality provides a +2 circumstance bonus on damage rolls when set against a charge.

Restriction: May only be applied to spears and polearms that can be braced against a charge.

Additional Cost: +100 gp; +3 to Craft DC of masterwork component.

Environmentally Designed

Armorsmiths who ply their trade in locales known for extreme weather learn ways to adapt their styles to produce armor specially suited for the environment. In hot locales, armorsmiths create well-ventilated suits of armor to prevent overheating, while in cold climates the craftsmen insulate their armor in order to help keep in body heat. A suit of armor with this item quality provides a +2 circumstance bonus on saving throws against harsh environmental conditions in either extreme heat or extreme cold (determined at the time the armor is created).

Restriction: May only be applied to armor.

Additional Cost: +100 gp; +5 to Craft DC of masterwork component.

Folded Metal

A technique perfected by blacksmiths to increase the strength of their creations, the folded metal technique makes for highly durable weapons. This process involves folding two or more heated metals onto each other numerous times during forging. A weapon crafted

with this item quality gains a +4 bonus to its hardness.

Restriction: May only be applied to metal weapons.

Additional Cost: +200 gp; +7 to Craft DC of masterwork component.

Lightweight

One of the most valuable techniques an armorsmith can learn is how to reduce the overall weight of the armor without sacrificing any of the protection it provides. Lightweight armors are extremely valuable and are sought after by adventurers and soldiers. The overall weight of a suit of armor with this item quality is reduced by 20%, or 1 pound, whichever is greater.

Restriction: May only be applied to armor.

Additional Cost: +200 gp (light and medium), +500 gp (heavy); +7 to Craft DC of masterwork component.

Long-Range

After long trials and many errors, bowyers and crossbow makers learned the secrets to making long-ranged weapons. Although not a difficult process once the trick is known, discovering how to increase the range on a weapon can often be an arduous task. A weapon with the long-range item quality increases its range increment by +20 feet.

Restriction: May only be applied to bows and crossbows.

Additional Cost: +100 gp; +3 to Craft DC of masterwork component.

Ornate

Although most soldiers in the field care little for the decorative aspect of a weapon or suit of armor, many craftsmen come to pride themselves on the ability to make an item both utilitarian and beautiful. An ornate weapon or suit of armor brings with it a certain amount of prestige, especially since quality decoration is often a sign of great honor or station. Ornate weapons and armor grant the owner a +2 circumstance bonus on Diplomacy or Intimidate checks (chosen when the weapon or armor is crafted) when wielded or worn in an appropriate setting.

Restriction: May be applied to any weapon or suit of armor.

Additional Cost: +400 gp (light), +600 gp (medium and heavy), +500 (weapon); +5 to Craft DC of masterwork component.

Perfect Balance

Weaponsmiths know the value of stability, and they often strive for the perfect balance point in every weapon they create. While a poorly balanced weapon can make the wielder clumsy and awkward in combat, a weapon with perfectly distributed weight can help a combatant remain effective even when unstable. A melee weapon with the perfect balance quality grants its wielder an additional +1 bonus to AC when taking the total defense action.

Restriction: May only be applied to melee weapons.

Additional Cost: +100 gp; +5 to Craft DC of masterwork component.

Razor Sharp

Some craftsmen can coax a superior edge from a blade. Swordsmen consider such weapons extremely valuable, as such blades not only slice into opponents more easily but they also stick within such foes less frequently. A bladed weapon with this item quality deals an extra +1 point of damage.

Restriction: May only be applied to bladed slashing weapons.

Additional Cost: +1,000 gp; +6 to Craft DC of masterwork component.

Reinforced

One of the most challenging qualities to apply to a suit of armor, reinforcement is also one of the most highly sought after. Few craftsmen can ever perfect the technique. Reinforcing a suit of armor effectively changes the armor's value, often making what some would consider lesser armor into something significantly more useful. By lining the armor with toughened leather, small metal plates, or other hardened material, the armorsmith provides a little extra defense without compromising flexibility. Armor with this item quality increases its armor bonus by +1, but it weighs 10% more (minimum 2 pounds).

Restriction: May only be applied to armor.

Additional Cost: +800 (light), +1,000 gp (medium), +1,200 gp (heavy); +10 to Craft DC of masterwork component.

Resilient

Adventurers, more than people in any other profession, see the value in durable weapons and armor. Those craftsmen who learn to create items that can stand up to damage as well as normal wear and tear find their skills in high demand, as constant usage can dull and break valuable items. For this reason, many craftsmen take the extra time to create weapons and armor that can stand up to even the most extreme conditions and gain a reputation for producing excellent wares. Weapons and armors with this item quality have 5 more hit points (regardless of the original material they were made from) than standard items of the same type.

Restriction: May be applied to all weapons and armor.

Additional Cost: +200 gp; +5 to Craft DC of masterwork component.

Segmented

One of the tricks armor crafters use to make their armor more attractive to prospective buyers is to increase the flexibility. Heavy armor does many warriors little good when they rely at least as much on their agility as their raw physical might. Thus, many craftsmen learn to segment armor in order to create more points of articulation. A suit of armor with this item quality increases its maximum Dexterity bonus by +1.

Restriction: May only be applied to armor.

Additional Cost: +200 gp (light and medium), +300 gp (heavy); +5 to Craft DC of masterwork component.

Serrated

Dealing particularly nasty wounds, a serrated weapon possesses small notches along its edge that tear the flesh, much like a saw. Often used both on swords as well as the tips of arrows, the serrated quality can cause excessive bleeding beyond the initial damage. Weapons with this item quality deal 1 point of damage each round for 1d4 rounds following a successful critical hit. This repeating damage does not apply to creatures immune to critical hits.

Restriction: May only be applied to piercing or slashing weapons.

Additional Cost: +600 gp; +5 to Craft DC of masterwork component.

Vital Coverage

One of the greatest flaws facing armor are large numbers of vulnerable points. Although no suit of armor can completely protect a wearer, some craftsmen make sure to reinforce the armor near vital organs, provide flaps and panels that block attacks against exposed flesh, and generally seal up any vulnerabilities that could lead to a devastating attack. Any suit of armor with this item quality grants an additional +2 armor bonus against attacks made to confirm critical hits.

Restriction: May only be applied to armor.

Additional Cost: +200 gp (light), +400 gp (medium), +1,000 gp (heavy); +7 to Craft DC of masterwork component.

Item Qualities

	—Cost—					
Item Quality	Light	Medium	Large	Weapon	Craft DC	Restriction
Acid washed	+100 gp	+200 gp	+200 gp	+100 gp	+5	—
Basket hilt	—	—	—	+50 gp	+3	Swords
Blood groove	—	—	—	+100 gp	+5	Swords
Caster armor	+400 gp	+800 gp	+1,000 gp	—	+7	Armor
Deceptive	—	—	—	+800 gp	+7	Weapons
Enhanced bracing	—	—	—	+100 gp	+3	Spears, polearms
Environmentally designed	+100 gp	+100 gp	+100 gp	—	+5	Armor
Folded metal	—	—	—	+200 gp	+7	Metal weapons
Lightweight	+200 gp	+200 gp	+500 gp	—	+7	Armor
Long-range	—	—	—	+100 gp	+3	Bows, crossbows
Ornate	+400 gp	+600 gp	+600 gp	+500 gp	+5	—
Perfect balance	—	—	—	+100 gp	+5	Melee
Razor sharp	—	—	—	+1,000 gp	+6	Bladed slashing
Reinforced	+800 gp	+1,000 gp	+1,200 gp	—	+10	Armor
Resilient	+200 gp	+200 gp	+200 gp	+200 gp	+5	—
Segmented	+200 gp	+200 gp	+300 gp	—	+5	Armor
Serrated	—	—	—	+600 gp	+5	Piercing, slashing
Vital coverage	+200 gp	+400 gp	+1,000 gp	—	+7	Armor

by Kevin Baase and Eric Jansing • Illustrated by Eric Dechamps

Checkmate!

Chess Made Deadly

For as long as intelligent creatures have been able to find the time for diversions from the necessities of daily life, games have played an important role. Most games are played for fun, to challenge others, or for the joy of new experiences. Some more serious games, however, are played to settle disputes or risk fortunes, and some are played for the highest stakes of all.

The chaturani represent a game of the most serious sort. The chaturani are intelligent, extraplanar constructs designed to resemble life-sized humanoid chess pieces. Their dangerous version of chess is performed on a gigantic battlefield rather than a small table-sized board. While chaturani can provide something as innocent as an afternoon's relaxation, the reality is that they all too often have a far deadlier use.

Individual or small groups of chaturani can be conjured using standard summoning spells, while an entire set of chaturani is summoned using a powerful artifact and an elaborate, arcane ritual. Most commonly, they are summoned to settle some sort of dispute between two factions, nations, or individuals who don't want to get their own hands dirty. A neutral third party often summons the chaturani to a gigantic chessboard, using these substitute warriors to fight a bloodless conflict between two sides. Often, however, live combatants stand against the chaturani to defend the honor of one side or gain some sort of superior advantage. Sometimes, prisoners are pitted in a game against the chaturani, with only the survivors going free. Rarely, but with increasing frequency, chaturani are delivered to serve as expendable, inhuman mercenaries for missions on which an employer would rather not send his own servitors.

Most chaturani have a humanoid form (although, theoretically, any design is possible), and appear to be members of whatever race they are designed to resemble. Anyone observing them more than casually can detect this ruse on a DC 15 Spot check.

Chaturan Traits

A chaturan has the following traits (unless otherwise noted in a creature's entry).

***Plane Shift* (Sp):** Once per day, a chaturan can return to its home plane. This effect is otherwise similar to the spell of the same name (caster level 13th). A king can use this ability to transfer any remaining willing units in its set along with itself, so long as they are within 40 feet.

Sample Encounters

Chaturani are rarely encountered outside of a set, unless recently created or summoned individually.

Set (EL 13): A set consists of eight pawns, two knights, two bishops, two rooks, one queen, and one king. All the units press the attack while constantly remaining vigilant in defense of their king.

Ecology

The first sets of chaturan chess constructs were built millennia ago on the Clockwork Nirvana of Mechanus. At first deities and other powerful entities used them merely for sport or to settle disputes without a loss of resources. Over the centuries, word of the chaturani spread to beings from

other planes, and these creatures from the Outer Planes and the Material Plane learned the secrets of their construction. While most chaturani are strictly lawful, some beings of good and evil alignments impart their ideologies to chaturan designed for special purposes.

Chaturani from Mechanus are most commonly summoned to play elaborate games to decide the fates of certain beings or lands, or merely for the amusement of the players. Sometimes powerful beings summon chaturani for other purposes, including warfare, assassinations, espionage, or guardianship.

Environment: Most chaturani are native to the Clockwork Nirvana of Mechanus, but many are also native to the Seven Mounting Heavens of Celestia, the Peaceable Kingdoms of Arcadia, the Infernal Battlefield of Acheron, or the Nine Hells of Baator. They can be found in any land or underground.

Planar lore also suggests evidence of a demiplane of tactical competition, where large numbers of chaturani wage endless matches with others of their kind. Rumors persist of beings based off a suit of playing cards who often do battle with the chessfolk.

Typical Physical Characteristics: Chaturani are usually manufactured from a sturdy and flexible composite material, giving them the appearance of near-living flesh. Chaturani are capable of emotions and their facial features and body language can convey as such. Although some pieces appear to wear armor, this is merely an extension of the same material that makes up the rest of their bodies. The shields and weapons they wield are separate, made from the usual materials.

Alignment: Chaturani are usually lawful neutral. Being intelligent constructs, this alignment makes them ideal servitors and mercenaries. Lawful good and lawful evil chaturani serve their masters with equal fervor.

Typical Treasure

Chaturani do not collect most treasure, as they have no need for coins or objects of art. They do, however, claim useful magic items they find, particularly staffs for the queen and weapons for the rest.

Society

Chaturani separate themselves into two divisions: light and dark. Light pieces tend toward good, while dark pieces tend toward evil. Regardless of their actual alignments, light pieces always oppose dark pieces, and vice versa. A lawful good light piece always opposes the actions of lawful good dark piece, for example.

Chaturani organize themselves into sets, nearly always including eight pawns, two knights, two bishops, two rooks, a queen and a king. These sets are a monarchy, with the other units taking orders from the king. When a set loses one or more members, it seeks to fill the holes by defeating opposing sets and demanding a unit as a victory condition, or by picking up units cut off from their own sets.

Since they exist primarily to compete in tactical battles, chaturani spend all their time outside of combat seeking out new skirmishes, training to hone their skills, or filling in gaps in their ranks.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF CHESS

Although many countries claim to have invented chess, India is currently considered the most likely place of origin. The word chess and its counterpart in several other languages can all be traced back to the Sanskrit word chaturanga, which means "quadripartite" and reflects the division of ancient Indian armies into four parts: infantry, elephants, cavalry, and chariots.

The Persians evolved the game into chatrang, or shatranj, as it is more commonly called. This version of the game more closely resembles the modern version of chess.

The Chinese developed another variation known as xiangqi in 4th century BCE, which is still played today.

Chessboards and Matches

While chaturani can be encountered anywhere, they typically are found on chessboards in proportion to their size. These chessboards can be of any material, and might not even be substantial. For instance, a room with alternating spaces of light and darkness could constitute a chessboard. Several things are always constant, however. A chessboard almost always consists of eight rows (or ranks) and eight columns (or files) of 5-foot squares of alternating shades of light and dark. The colors can vary widely, but one is always darker hued than the other. On rare occasions, boards with larger spaces (such as 10-foot squares) are created to allow for larger participants. These boards simply resemble chessboards, and do not enforce the rules of chess in any manner, although chaturani try to fight within the bounds of the board unless the battle spills into the surrounding area. Powerful artifacts known as *chaturan battle boards* are known to exist, and they adhere far more closely to the rules of chess.

Chaturan Battle Board (Minor Artifact): These boards look just like normal chessboards, except they are 40-foot long on a side. *Chaturan battle boards* can be found anywhere large enough to contain them, and are most commonly located in places such as a city square, a royal court, a wizard's keep, or on one of the Outer Planes. One being is designated to control the board at the time of its construction, although another can replace that person later.

When its controller activates the board, a life-sized game of chess plays out on its surface. Any creatures of Medium

or smaller size standing on any of the spaces where a piece would start when the game begins becomes part of the game and represents the piece typically found in that place. For example, if an elf stands in the queen's space at the start of the game, the elf will move and function as the queen during that game. Any creature larger than Medium or standing in any space other than one where a piece would start is teleported off the board to a space directly adjacent to it, as is any creature that tries to enter the board once the game starts. Any unwilling participants may attempt a single DC 20 Will save, and those who succeed are teleported off the board. Those who fail must remain on the board and play by its rules until the end of the game. Any starting spaces not occupied by other creatures at the start of the game are filled in by chaturani that correspond to the proper chess pieces, with the needed pieces summoned from their home plane by the *chaturan battle board.*

At that point, a representative is chosen for each side to control that side as the chess player. If there is no controller chosen, or there is a dispute, the king for each side controls his forces. All pieces on the board (whether chaturani or other creatures) must follow the controller's commands until the end of the game or until they are eliminated. Creatures acting as pieces can still think, talk, and move around within the squares they occupy, but they cannot move outside of their squares or attack any other creatures in any way. Chaturani are silent and motionless during a game until they are commanded to move by their controller. None of the pieces in play can be harmed or affected by any attack or spell from any creature they are not currently battling against as part of the game, nor can any piece be harmed or affected by any attack or spell from any creature who is not one of the pieces in the game. Pieces can only attack when ordered to move by the person controlling them.

The game is identical to chess. Pieces move in the same fashion as they do in a normal chess game. Any creature that does not move on its own is moved as if by *telekinesis.* The main difference in the game comes when one piece tries to occupy the square of an opposing piece. Instead of simply taking that piece, a trial by combat begins. The attacking piece always wins initiative in this combat. This assault continues until one of the combatants is killed or surrenders. The losing piece is teleported off the side of the board and the winning piece takes that square. The game continues until one controller or king surrenders, a stalemate is reached, or one of the kings is placed in checkmate.

Strong transmutation; CL 20th.

For Player Characters

Spellcasters can summon chaturani using the following *summon monster* spells, which become lawful-aligned.

Chaturan	Summon Monster Level
Pawn	3rd-level list
Knight	5th-level list
Bishop	7th-level list
Rook	8th-level list

Chaturan Lore

Characters with ranks in Knowledge (arcana) or Knowledge (the planes) can learn more about chaturani. As there are numerous different kinds of chaturani, add the listed modifier to the CR of the chaturan you're seeking information about to learn the check's DC. When a character makes a skill check, the following lore is revealed, including the information from lower DCs.

Knowledge (arcana) or (the planes)

DC	Result
10 + CR	This is a chaturan, an intelligent construct from a lawfully aligned plane. This result reveals all construct traits.
15 + CR	Chaturani usually group together in sets consisting of one king, one queen, eight pawns, and two knights, bishops, and rooks.
20 + CR	The composite materials from which Chaturan are created resist cold, electricity, fire, and nonmagical weapons.
25 + CR	Each chaturan has the ability to *plane shift* to its home plane, while the king can return the whole set at once.
30 + CR	Defeating the king of a chaturani set forces the entire set to surrender, and they can be commanded into service by the victor.

Pawn

This humanoid wears a suit of shining armor and carries a longsword and shield. The warrior moves with an almost clockwork awkwardness and fearless determination.

PAWN **CR 2**

Usually LN Medium construct (extraplanar)

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Listen +2, Spot +2

Languages Celestial, Common, Infernal, Modron

AC 16, touch 10, flat-footed 16
(+5 natural, +1 shield)

hp 31 (2 HD); **DR** 5/magic

Immune bull rush, construct immunities

Resist cold 5, electricity 5, fire 5; **SR** 15

Fort +0, **Ref** +0, **Will** +0

Weakness forward motion

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares); en passant, forward motion

Melee longsword +3 (1d8+2/19–20)

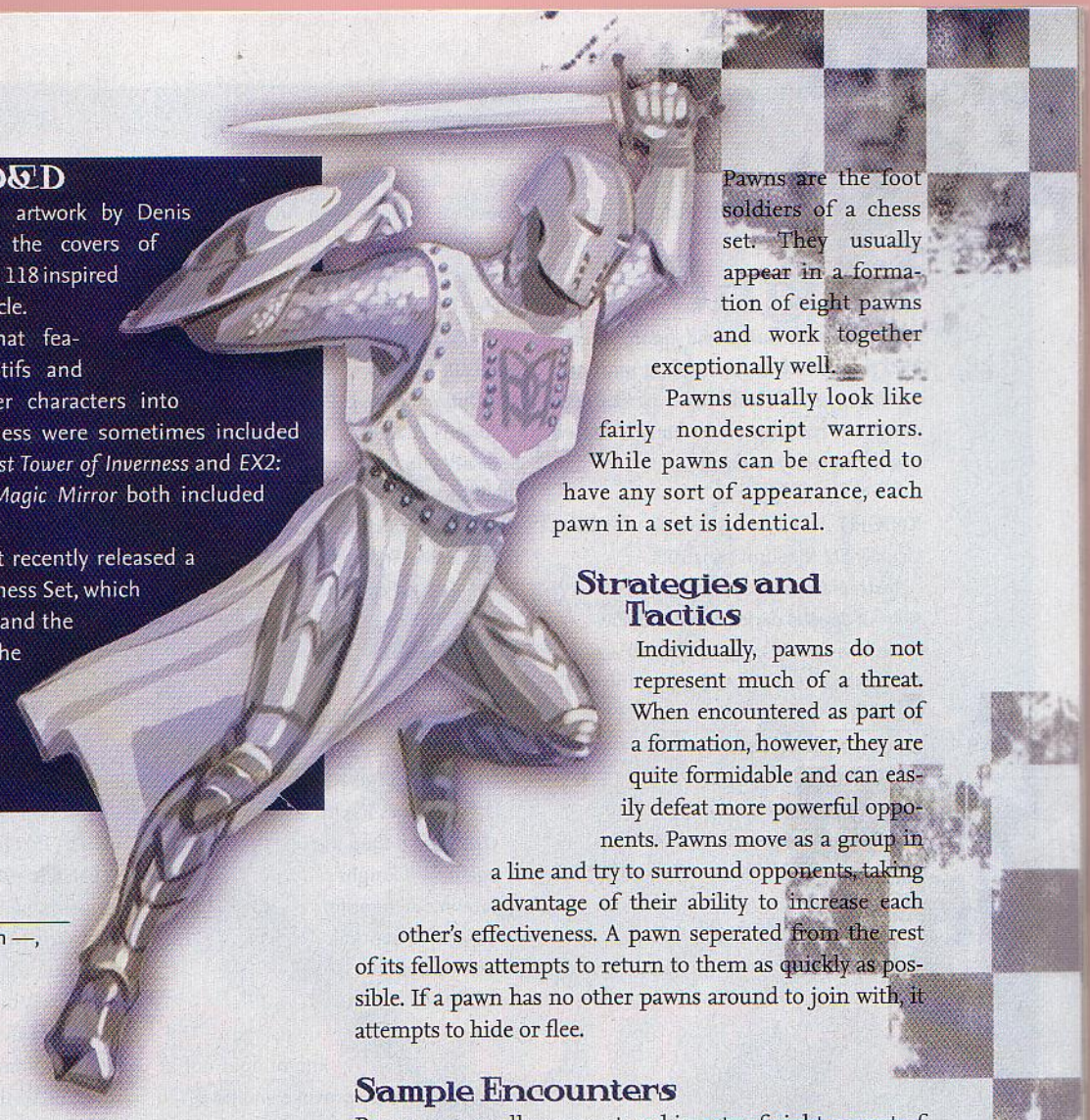
Base Atk +1; **Grp** +3

CHESS AND D&D

The classic chessboard artwork by Denis Beauvais that graced the covers of *Dragon* #83, 86, 89, and 118 inspired the creatures in this article.

Dungeon rooms that featured chessboard motifs and traps that force player characters into games of life-sized chess were sometimes included in adventures. *C2: Ghost Tower of Inverness* and *EX2: The Land Beyond the Magic Mirror* both included such a trap.

Wizards of the Coast recently released a limited edition D&D Chess Set, which incorporates Bahamut and the metallic dragons as the light side, opposed by Tiamat and the chromatic dragons as the dark pieces.



Special Actions en passant, offensive line

Abilities Str 14, Dex 10, Con —, Int 5, Wis 11, Cha 10

SQ construct traits, forward motion, *plane shift*

Feats Improved Initiative

Skills Listen +2, Spot +2

Advancement 3–6 HD (Medium), by character class, or promotion (see text); **Favored Class** fighter

En Passant (Ex) During its first movement in an encounter, a pawn may move double its speed. This movement provokes attacks of opportunities from any foe whose threatened area it enters.

Forward Motion (Ex) If a pawn chooses to move, it must move toward an opponent in a straight line. As long as a pawn threatens an opponent, it cannot move and must attack each round if possible. A pawn cannot be forcefully moved by any means, including bull rush, wind effects, or spells or abilities such as *telekinesis*.

Offensive Line (Ex): If a pawn is wielding a shield while adjacent to at least one other pawn wielding a shield, the pawns may form an offensive line. This grants each pawn in the line a +1 deflection bonus to AC and a +1 insight bonus on attack rolls and Reflex saves for each pawn in the line, up to eight pawns. Additionally, add +2 to the check DC for each pawn in the offensive line when an enemy attempts to use the Tumble skill to pass through a space occupied by any pawn in the offensive line (as if the enemy had passed through all their spaces). For example, a line of six pawns would bestow each pawn a +6 bonus and the Tumble check DC would increase by 12.

Pawns are the foot soldiers of a chess set. They usually appear in a formation of eight pawns and work together exceptionally well.

Pawns usually look like fairly nondescript warriors. While pawns can be crafted to have any sort of appearance, each pawn in a set is identical.

Strategies and Tactics

Individually, pawns do not represent much of a threat. When encountered as part of a formation, however, they are quite formidable and can easily defeat more powerful opponents. Pawns move as a group in a line and try to surround opponents, taking advantage of their ability to increase each other's effectiveness. A pawn seperated from the rest of its fellows attempts to return to them as quickly as possible. If a pawn has no other pawns around to join with, it attempts to hide or flee.

Sample Encounters

Pawns are usually encountered in sets of eight as part of a chaturan set. When not encountered on a chessboard, however, they may appear in smaller groups:

Individual (EL 2): A lone pawn has become separated from its set. It attempts to find the rest of its set and does not engage opponents if possible. If the rest of the pawns have been destroyed, it *plane shifts* to its home plane as soon as possible.

Team (EL 6–8): A small group of four to eight pawns is sometimes ordered to patrol an area by their summoner, usually to capture runaway prisoners or to kill any intruders.

Ecology

Typical Physical Characteristics: A pawn stands roughly 6 feet tall and weighs 300 pounds.

Advanced Pawns

In addition to being able to advance by Hit Dice or by character class, pawns have another unique option. A pawn who survives several campaigns might be eligible for a promotion. A king may promote a pawn to any other type of chaturan. Should the pawn be promoted to another king, it must seek out others of its kind to complete a set. Kings use this power judi-

ciously, as they only want the best of the best to round out the upper ranks of a set.

Knight

This mounted humanoid figure is covered from head to toe in plate mail and carries a heavy shield lance of exquisite design. It rears up on its horrific mount and looks ready to charge.

KNIGHT **CR 4**

Usually LN Medium construct (extraplanar)

Init +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Listen +0, Spot +0

Languages Celestial, Common, Infernal, Modron

AC 20, touch 10, flat-footed 20 (+8 natural, +2 shield)

hp 53 (6 HD); **DR** 5/magic

Immune construct immunities

Resist cold 10, fire 10, electricity 10; **SR** 17

Fort +2, **Ref** +2, **Will** +2

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares); furious charge, knight's move

Melee mwk lance +9 (1d8+3/x3) or

Melee longsword +7 (1d8+3/19–20)

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft. (10 ft. with lance)

Base Atk +4; **Grp** +7

Atk Options Cleave, Power Attack, furious charge

Special Actions knight's move

Abilities Str 17, Dex 10, Con —, Int 11, Wis 11, Cha 13

SQ construct traits, *plane shift*, shield ally

Feats Cleave, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (lance)

Skills Intimidate +10, Jump +16

Advancement 5–18 HD (Medium) or by character class; **Favored Class** knight

Furious Charge (Ex) When a knight uses the charge action, it may move and attack as if with a standard charge and then move again. The knight's total movement for the round cannot exceed double its speed. The knight does not provoke an attack of opportunity from the opponent it attacks.

When a knight uses the charge action, it can deal double damage with a melee weapon (or triple damage with a lance). Instead of dealing additional damage, the knight has the option of trying to catch its opponent flat-footed when making its attack. To do so, the knight must succeed on an Intimidate check opposed by its opponent's Sense Motive check.

Knight's Move (Su) A knight can teleport up to 20 feet as a move action. Using this ability does not provoke an attack of opportunity.

Shield Ally (Ex) As an immediate action, a knight can opt to absorb part of the damage dealt to an adjacent ally. Each time this ally takes damage from a physical attack before the knight's next turn, the knight can take half this damage on itself. The target takes the other half as normal. A knight can only absorb damage from physical melee attacks and ranged attacks, such as an incoming arrow or a blow from a sword, not from spells and other effects.

Skills Due to a knight's unusual construction, it suffers no armor check penalties from shields.

A knight and its mount are not two separate creatures, but one with a single body that cannot be separated. Both figures can have virtually any appearance, but together must always be no larger than Medium size. The mount can resemble any number of creatures, including miniature horses, giant seahorses, giant lizards, dragons, and the like.

Strategies and Tactics

Knights take advantage of their ability to move around a field of combat unseen to keep enemies disoriented. When this tactic appears unsuccessful, a knight employs its furious charge to take an opponent off-guard. It uses its shield ally ability to defend more powerful pieces, such as the king and queen.

Sample Encounters

Knights usually come in pairs. When encountered alone, they are often summoned to fulfill the role of a humanoid knight when the real thing is unavailable.

Individual (CR 4): A wizard-king has summoned a knight to represent him in a joust in place of his recently deceased champion.

Ecology

Typical Physical Characteristics: A knight (including the mount) is usually about 8 feet in total height and weighs around 800 pounds.

Advanced Knights

A knight's favored class is knight (*Player's Handbook II*, 24). If you are not using this book in your campaign, substitute fighter as its favored class.

Bishop

This humanoid wears priestly robes and bears a magnificent polearm in both hands. He wears a pontiff's hat and his stately face is partially obscured by a long beard.

BISHOP **CR 5**

Usually LN Medium construct (extraplanar)

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Listen +4, Spot +4

Aura tactical (60 ft.)

Languages Celestial, Common, Infernal, Modron

AC 18, touch 11, flat-footed 17 (+1 Dex, +7 natural)

hp 64 (8 HD); **DR** 5/magic

Immune construct immunities

Resist cold 10, fire 10, electricity 10; **SR** 18

Fort +2, **Ref** +3, **Will** +6

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares); diagonal devotion

Melee +1 *halberd* +9 (1d8+4/x3)

Base Atk +6; **Grp** +8

Atk Options Combat Expertise, Improved Trip

Typical Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 5th)

3rd—*bestow curse* (DC 17), *inflict serious wounds* (DC 17), *prayer**

2nd—*aid**, *align weapon*, *bull's strength*, *hold person* (DC 16)

1st—*bless*, *divine favor*, *doom* (DC 15), *obscuring mist*, *remove fear**

0—*guidance*, *inflict minor wounds* (DC 14), *mending*, *resistance*, *virtue*

*Domain spell; **Domains** Competition, Courage

Abilities Str 14, Dex 13, Con —, Int 13, Wis 18, Cha 16

SQ construct traits, *plane shift*

Feats Combat Casting, Combat Expertise, Improved Trip

Skills Balance +3, Concentration +14, Diplomacy +5, Intimidate +8, Jump +8, Sense Motive +9, Spellcraft +9, Tumble +6

Advancement 9–24 HD (Medium) or by character class; **Favored Class** cleric

Tactical Aura (Ex) Once per encounter, as a swift action, a bishop can activate an aura that motivates all allies within 60 feet (including himself) who can hear it. This aura grants a circumstance bonus equal to the bishop's Charisma modifier (usually +3) on damage rolls when charging or flanking and to Armor Class against attacks of opportunity. The aura lasts for a number of rounds equal to the bishop's Hit Dice (usually 8), and is dismissed if the bishop is destroyed or its allies can no longer hear it.

Diagonal Devotion (Ex) A bishop can move diagonally with no reduction to its speed (it does not count every second square as 2 squares). Additionally, a bishop can move diagonally past a corner. A bishop that does not move diagonally treats every second square as 2 squares, just as a creature would normally treat diagonal movement.

Spells A bishop can cast divine spells as a 5th-level cleric. A bishop worships no deity, but rather the ideals of competition and tactics. It has access to two of the following domains: Competition*, Courage*, Protection, War. A bishop does not receive any granted powers. Its favored weapon is the halberd.

*These domains appear in *Spell Compendium*. If you do not use this book, substitute Law and Luck.

The bishop is the stern field commander of a chess set. It is no healer, as its divine magic is used mostly to destroy and defeat opponents.

Strategies and Tactics

A bishop always engages its tactical aura at the beginning of an encounter to motivate its allies. A bishop tends to dominate the battlefield more than the other pieces, moving around almost every round to engage an

opponent. Bishops rely more on their magical abilities than melee attacks to hamper or destroy enemies.

Sample Encounters

Bishops usually come in pairs. When encountered alone, they are often summoned to serve as a commander for troops when extra assistance is required.

Individual (CR 5): Bishops are rarely encountered alone. A solitary bishop works best when encountered with another group of creatures, and is usually found leading less powerful creatures into battle.

Ecology

Typical Physical Characteristics: A bishop stands 6 feet tall and weighs 275 pounds.

Advanced Bishops

A bishop that takes levels in the cleric class adds its innate caster level (5th) to its cleric levels to determine its caster level for all purposes, including determining spells per day.

Rook

This construct resembles a miniature tower, slightly higher than the tallest of humans. From the side of the battlement's base jut three humanoid arms bearing swords. It moves with speed and grace that belies its appearance.

ROOK **CR 7**

Usually LN Medium construct (extraplanar)

Init +2; **Senses** Blindsight 60 ft.; Listen +15, Spot +15

Languages Celestial, Common, Infernal, Modron

AC 22, touch 12, flat-footed 20 (+2 Dex, +10 natural)

hp 75 (10 HD); **DR** 5/magic

Immune construct immunities

Resist cold 10, fire 10, electricity 10; **SR** 20

Fort +3, **Ref** +5, **Will** +5

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares); orthagonal onslaught

Melee +2 *scimitar* +16/+11 (1d6+8/18–20) 2 mwk scimitars +15/+10 (1d6+6/18–20)

Base Atk +7; **Grp** +13

Atk Options Power Attack, orthagonal onslaught

Special Actions slashing blades

Abilities Str 23, Dex 15, Con —, Int 13, Wis 15, Cha 15

SQ construct traits, *plane shift*, topple

Feats Improved Multiweapon Fighting, Multiweapon Fighting, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (scimitar)

Skills Balance +4, Intimidate +15, Jump +12, Listen +15, Spot +15

Advancement 11–30 HD (Medium) or by character class; **Favored Class** fighter

Orthagonal Onslaught (Ex) When moving in a straight line (not diagonally), a rook can move up to its speed and take a full attack action. It must, however, move a minimum of 5 feet between each attack when using this ability, and it cannot return to a square it just exited. The rook is subject to attacks of opportunity during the onslaught. A rook prevented from completing its move is also prevented from finishing its full attack.

A rook may only perform an onslaught while wielding a slashing weapon. While executing an onslaught, a rook cannot use skills or abilities that involve concentration or require it to remain still, such as Move Silently, Hide, or Search. A rook can perform an onslaught only once per encounter.

Slashing Blades (Ex) A rook treats the scimitar as a light weapon for all purposes, including fighting with multiple weapons.

Topple (Ex) When a rook is destroyed in melee combat, it topples into the space of the creature that landed

the killing blow. Treat this as a cave-in or collapse, except the bury zone is limited to the 5-foot-space of the opponent who landed the killing blow, and the slide zone is all the adjacent squares. In the case of an opponent with a space larger than 5-feet or that attacks from greater than 5 feet away (such as with a reach weapon), the rook topples into an adjacent square in the direction from which the killing blow originated. The resulting rubble weighs 2,000 pounds.

Feats In combination with its natural abilities, a rook's Multiweapon Fighting feat allows it to attack with all its arms at no penalty. Improved Multiweapon Fighting, from *Savage Species*, grants a second extra attack with each offhand weapon at a –5 penalty.

The rook is the brute of a chess set. It mauls its opponents with heartless precision. Lacking legs or wheels, it simply glides along the ground, bouncing or plowing through obstacles.

Strategies and Tactics

A rook moves swiftly through the field of combat, taking apart foes with its onslaught of whirling blades.

Sample Encounters

Rooks usually come in pairs. When encountered alone, they are often summoned to provide support on the battlefield or serve as a guardian.

Individual (CR 7): A solitary rook makes for quite a formidable foe on its own. Rooks are usually summoned to provide a serious threat or to keep opponents busy while other troops take care of business elsewhere.

Ecology

Typical Physical Characteristics: A rook stands 8 feet tall and weighs 2,000 pounds. A rook is sometimes built with large wheels at its sides. Earlier rooks were designed this way to resemble moving war chariots, but this design fell out of use among most crafters. These wheels have no impact on game statistics.

Variant Rooks

Rooks can be built with extra arms, allowing for additional melee attacks. Each additional arm grants another attack with a masterwork scimitar and increases the CR by 1.

Other rooks are created with a pair of outward-curving horns, which grants them a gore attack as a secondary natural weapon that deals 1d6 points of damage and double damage on a charge. These are often called heraldic rooks, as their image is often emblazoned on family crests.

Rooks are sometimes designed to explode instead of toppling when destroyed. Such rooks deal 6d6 points of fire damage to all creatures within 5 feet and lack the topple ability. A DC 17 Reflex save results in half damage. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Queen

This female figure is dressed in regal accoutrements, with robes that flow to her feet. Her skin is unusually smooth. She bears a staff that crackles with energy.

QUEEN **CR 9**

Usually LN Medium construct (extraplanar)

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Listen +10, Spot +10

Languages Celestial, Common, Infernal, Modron

AC 25, touch 16, flat-footed 19; Dodge, greater mobility, skirmish (+6 Dex, +9 natural)

hp 86 (12 HD); **DR** 10/magic

Immune construct immunities

Resist cold 10, fire 10, electricity 10; **SR** 22

Fort +4, **Ref** +10, **Will** +9; evasion

Speed 50 ft. (10 squares); unhindered motion

Melee +2 *quarterstaff* +15/+10 (1d6+8)

Base Atk +9; **Grp** +13

Atk Options Combat Expertise, Spring Attack, Whirlwind Attack, pounce, skirmish +3d6

Special Actions dominate

Typical Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 9th)

4th (5/day)—*repair critical damage*, solid fog* (DC 20)

3rd (7/day)—*dispel magic, lightning bolt* (DC 19), *repair serious damage**

2nd (8/day)—*blur, eagle's splendor, Melf's acid arrow, repair moderate damage**

1st (8/day)—*grease* (DC 17), *magic missile, obscuring mist, repair light damage*, shield*

0 (6/day)—*acid splash, daze* (DC 16), *detect magic, mage hand, mending, prestidigitation, repair minor damage*, resistance* (light side queens often replace three of these with *dancing lights, flare, and light*)

*These spells appear in *Spell Compendium*. If you do not have this book, treat them as cure spells of the same level, except they are of the transmutation school and only heal constructs.

Abilities Str 18, Dex 22, Con —, Int 20, Wis 21, Cha 23

SQ construct traits, familiar, *plane shift*

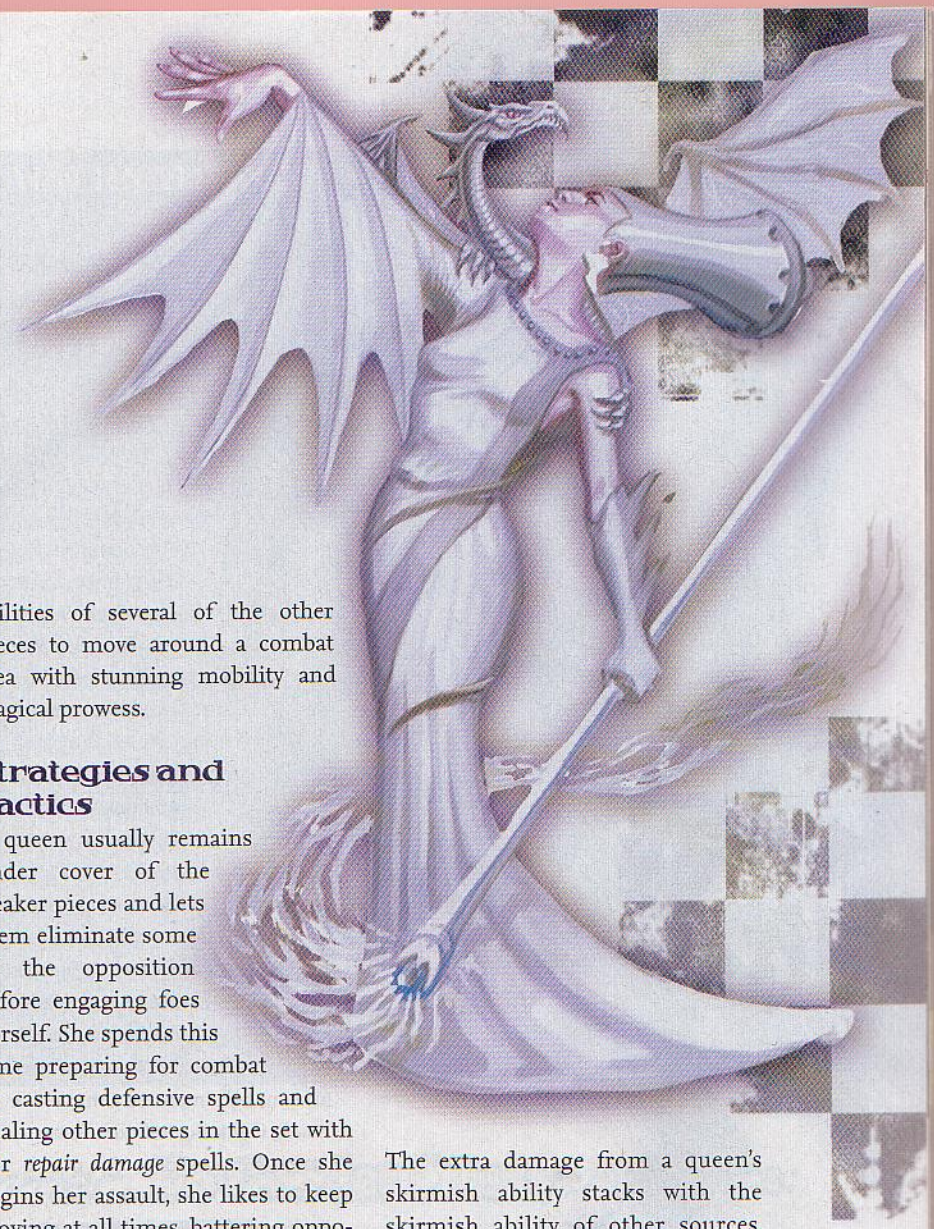
Feats Combat Expertise, Dodge, Mobility, Spring Attack, Whirlwind Attack

Skills Balance +23, Bluff +11, Concentration +15, Diplomacy +15, Intimidate +8, Jump +29, Listen +10, Sense Motive +10, Spellcraft +15 (+17 scrolls), Spot +10, Tumble +23, Use Magic Device +16 (+18 scrolls)

Advancement 13–36 HD (Medium) or by character class; **Favored Class** sorcerer

Greater Mobility (Ex) A queen gets a +8 dodge bonus to Armor Class against attacks of opportunity caused when she moves out of or within a threatened area. This supersedes the benefit from the Mobility feat.

Skirmish (Ex) A queen deals an extra 3d6 points of damage on all attacks she makes during any round in which she moves at least 10 feet. The extra damage applies only to attacks taken during the queen's turn. The extra damage applies only against living creatures that have a discernible anatomy. Undead, constructs, oozes, plants, incorporeal creatures, and creatures immune to extra damage from critical hits are not vulnerable to



this damage. The queen must be able to see the target well enough to pick out a vital spot and must be able to reach such a spot. A queen can apply this extra damage to ranged attacks made while skirmishing, but only if the target is within 30 feet. A queen also gains a +3 competence bonus to Armor Class during any round in which she moves at least 10 feet. The bonus applies as soon as the queen has moved 10 feet, and lasts until the start of her next turn.

Unhindered Motion (Ex) A queen can move diagonally with no reduction to her speed (she does not count every second square as 2 squares). Additionally, a queen can move diagonally past a corner. When moving in a straight line, she can move through any sort of terrain that slows movement (such as undergrowth, rubble, and similar terrain) at her normal speed and without taking damage or suffering any other impairment. She suffers no penalty to her AC when making a charge attack. A queen may always take 10 on any Jump or Tumble check. Finally, she is under a continuous *freedom of movement* effect, which cannot be dispelled.

Pounce (Ex) A queen may make a full attack at the end of a charge.

Dominate (Su) A queen can impose her will on an opponent just by looking into his or her eyes. This is similar to a gaze attack, except that the queen must use a standard action, and those merely looking at her are not affected. Anyone the queen targets must succeed on a DC 22 Will save or fall instantly under the queen's influence as per *dominate person* (caster level 12th). The ability has a range of 30 feet. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Spells A queen can cast arcane spells as a 9th-level sorcerer. She prefers spells of the evocation and transmutation schools. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

The queen is the powerhouse of a chess set. She combines the abilities of several of the other pieces to move around a combat area with stunning mobility and magical prowess.

Strategies and Tactics

A queen usually remains under cover of the weaker pieces and lets them eliminate some of the opposition before engaging foes herself. She spends this time preparing for combat by casting defensive spells and healing other pieces in the set with her *repair damage* spells. Once she begins her assault, she likes to keep moving at all times, battering opponents with her magical powers.

Ecology

Typical Physical Characteristics: A queen stands almost 6 feet tall and weighs 375 pounds.

Advanced Queens

On rare occasions, queens are built with an extra set of arms. This allows the queen to wield additional weapons, and grants the supernatural ability to activate two spell trigger magic items (such as staffs or wands) as a full-round action. This increases her CR by 1.

A queen who takes levels in the sorcerer class adds her innate caster level (9th) to her sorcerer levels to determine her caster level for all purposes, including determining spells per day and spells known.

The extra damage from a queen's skirmish ability stacks with the skirmish ability of other sources, such as the scout class (*Complete Adventurer*, 10).

King

This humanoid bears a regal countenance and is garbed in royal robes and a crown. He carries an oversized scepterlike mace that flashes and glows with arcane power.

KING **CR 9**

Usually LN Medium construct (extraplanar)

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Listen +15, Spot +15

Aura Awe (10 ft., DC 24), frightful presence (10-ft. radius, DC 24)

Languages Celestial, Common, Infernal, Modron

AC 22, touch 11, flat-footed 21 (+1 Dex, +11 natural)

hp 102 (15 HD); **DR** 10/magic

Immune construct immunities
Resist cold 10, fire 10, electricity 10; **SR** 22
Fort +5, **Ref** +8, **Will** +11
Weakness check and mate

Speed 10 ft. (2 squares)
Melee +3 *dire mace* +21/+16/+11 (1d10+13/19–20)
Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft. (10 ft. with dire mace)
Base Atk +11; **Grp** +18
Atk Options arcane channeling
Special Actions castling
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 15th, touch +18)
At will—*chill touch* (DC 18), *darkness* (dark side only), *inflict light wounds* (DC 18), *light* (light side only), *shocking grasp*, *touch of fatigue* (DC 17)
3/day—*bestow curse* (DC 21), *daylight* (light side only), *death knell* (DC 19), *deeper darkness* (dark side only), *ghoul touch* (DC 19), *inflict moderate wounds* (DC 19), *touch of idiocy*, empowered *vampiric touch*
1/day—*harm* (DC 23), *inflict serious wounds* (DC 20), *Otto's irresistible dance*, *slay living* (DC 22), *temporal stasis* (DC 25)

Abilities Str 25, Dex 13, Con —, Int 18, Wis 23, Cha 25
SQ construct traits, *plane shift*
Feats Combat Expertise, Empower Spell-Like Ability (*vampiric touch*), Exotic Weapon Proficiency (dire mace)[B], Improved Critical (dire mace), Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (dire mace)
Skills Bluff +19, Concentration +18, Diplomacy +11, Escape Artist +19, Intimidate +21, Listen +15, Sense Motive +18, Spellcraft +13 (+15 scrolls), Spot +15, Use Magic Device +16 (+18 scrolls), Use Rope +1 (+3 bindings)
Advancement 13–36 HD (Medium) or by character class; **Favored Class** duskblade

Aura of Awe (Su) A king can cause living opponents to become fascinated with it merely by speaking, as a standard action. Each creature to be fascinated must be within 10 feet, able to see and hear the king, and able to pay attention to it. Affected creatures must succeed on a DC 24 Will save or listen and take no actions for as long as the king continues to speak. This is an enchantment (compulsion), mind-affecting ability. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Frightful Presence (Ex) A king can unsettle foes with his mere presence. The ability takes effect automatically when he attacks or charges. Creatures within a 10-foot radius are subject to the effect if they have fewer Hit Dice than the king. A potentially affected creature that succeeds on a DC 24 Will save remains immune to that king's frightful presence for 24 hours. On a failure, creatures with 4 or fewer Hit Dice become panicked for 4d6 rounds and those with 5 or more Hit Dice become shaken for 4d6 rounds. Kings ignore the frightful presence of other kings. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Check and Mate (Ex) A king cannot move into a threatened square and must move out of such squares each turn if possible. If a king remains in a threatened square at the end of his turn, he is in check as long as he remains there. If a king remains in check for three full rounds, the king and his group must make an offer of surrender. If accepted, the opponents can do as they wish with them (including commanding their service). If the offer is refused, the king and all remaining members of his set are instantly returned to their home plane or from wherever they were initially summoned. If a king is destroyed, his entire group immediately surrenders.

Arcane Channeling (Su) A king can use a standard action to use any of his spell-like abilities that have a range of touch and deliver the spell through his weapon with a melee attack. Using a spell-like ability in this manner does not provoke attacks of opportunity. If the melee attack is successful, the attack deals damage normally; then the effect of the spell-like ability is resolved.

Castling (Su) As a standard action, a king can magically transport an allied rook to an adjacent square. The king may not use this ability if he is currently in an enemy's threatened area, and he must have line of effect to the target rook. This is a teleportation effect.

Dire Mace: A dire mace resembles a heavy mace, but with a longer shaft and a more massive head. A dire mace is too large to use in one hand without special training (the appropriate Exotic Weapon

Proficiency feat). A character can use a dire mace two-handed as a martial weapon. A dire mace sized for a Medium creature deals 1d10 points of bludgeoning damage, weighs 12 pounds, and costs 35 gp. It threatens a critical hit on a 20, and deals double damage on a success. A king wielding a dire mace has reach.

The king is both the greatest warrior in the set and the greatest liability; if opponents manage to defeat him, the whole set must surrender.

Strategies and Tactics

A king waits on the opposite end of the field from his enemies, defended by his allied pieces. A king avoids engaging opponents due to his special weakness. Any enemy foolish enough to approach a king, however, soon discovers how formidable he is at close range. When particularly harassed, a king often uses his castling ability to recall a rook to his side.

Ecology

Typical Physical Characteristics: A king stands 7 feet tall and weighs 350 pounds.

ALTERNATIVE CHESS SETS

While the chaturani were designed to be living chess pieces, chess battles can be fun with other creatures filling the roles. These sets could be pitted against a chaturani set or against each other, or even serve as a chess-themed encounter to challenge PCs.

Beholder Set: 8 lurking stranglers (*Monster Manual III*, 100, pawns), 2 directors (*Lords of Madness*, 137, knights), 2 eyes of the deep (*Lords of Madness*, 138, bishops), 2 beholders (rooks), 1 hive mother (*Lords of Madness*, 135, queen), 1 overseer (*Lords of Madness*, 139, king).

Devil Set: 8 legion devils (*Fiendish Codex II*, 122, pawns), 2 narzugons riding nightmares (*Fiendish Codex II*, 125, knights), 2 erinyes (bishops), 2 osyluths (rooks), 1 aspect of Fierna (*Fiendish Codex II*, 146, queen), 1 aspect of Belial (*Fiendish Codex II*, 146, king).

Githyanki Set: 8 1st-level githyanki warriors (*Monster Manual*, 127, pawns), 2 3rd-level githyanki fighters (knights), 2 githyanki gishes (fighter 1/wizard 3, bishops), 2 5th-level duthka'gith fighters (*Dungeon* #100, rooks), 1 lich-queen (githyanki lich wizard 8, queen), 1 10th-level githyanki wizard (king).

Illithid Set: 8 grimlock slaves (pawns), 2 mind flayers (knights), 2 brain golems (*Fiend Folio* 85, bishops), 2 ulitharids (*Lords of Madness* 158, rooks), 1 alhoon (*Lords of Madness* 157, queen), 1 9th-level mind flayer sorcerer (king).

Undead Set: 8 human warrior skeletons (*Monster Manual*, 225, pawns), 2 3rd-level swordwraith fighters (*Fiend Folio*, 173, knights), 2 4th-level huecuva clerics (*Fiend Folio*, 94, bishops), 2 vampires (*Monster Manual*, 250, rooks), 1 lich (*Monster Manual*, 166, queen), 1 mummy lord (*Monster Manual*, 190, king).

Yugoloth Set: 8 skeroloths (*Fiend Folio*, 197, pawns), 2 canoloths (*Monster Manual III*, 200, knights), 2 mezzoloths (*Monster Manual III*, 201, bishops), 2 piscoloths (*Fiend Folio*, 196, rooks), 1 arcanaloth (*Monster Manual II*, 203, queen), 1 ultroloth (*Monster Manual III*, 204, king).

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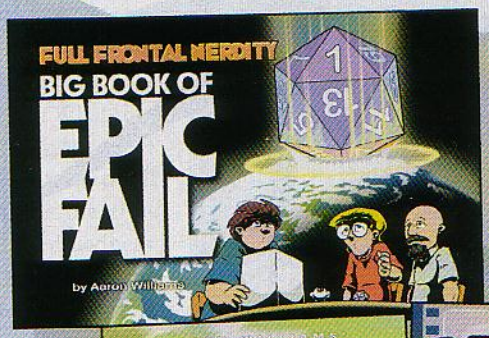

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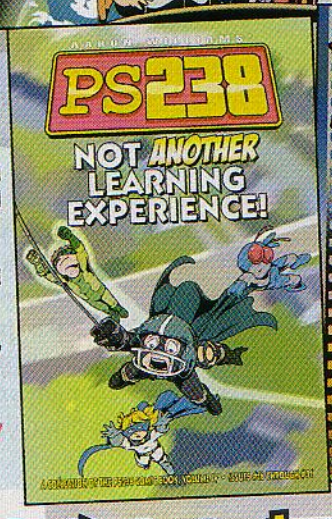

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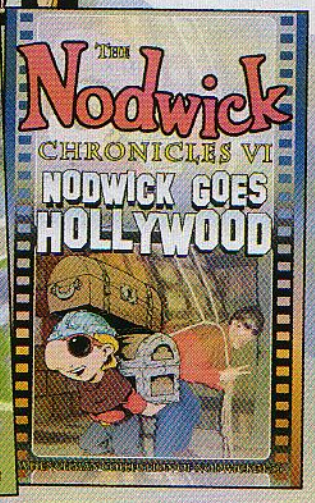

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by James Jacobs • illustrated by Peter Bergting

THE ECOLOGY OF THE KAORTI

"I have seen beyond the bounds of infinity and drawn down daemons from the stars... I have harnessed the shadows that stride from world to world to sow death and madness... Space belongs to me, do you hear?"

—H. P. Lovecraft, "From Beyond"

The world as we know it is a poison to some, a canker whose very existence is a constant irritant to something larger, more vast than anything sane mortal minds can comprehend. What we take to be order and nature is in fact the aberration, for the Far Realm is vast beyond all concept. It is what lies beyond the infinite of possibility. It is the infinite of impossibility. And that which dwells beyond where man was meant to travel does not react well to our timid intrusions.

HISTORY OF THE KAORTI

The Far Realm predates existence and life on the Material Plane—in fact, life might have begun on the Material Plane when one of the Elder Evils from the Far Realm brushed against it, and what leaked into our world became the aboleth race. Yet beyond the aboleths, few even guessed that there lay beyond our world a more ancient and insane realm. At some point after the collapse of the aboleth empire, the Elder Elves

became the first mortal race to discover the Far Realm when, quite by accident, they created the Vast Gate, a portal they hoped could bridge all distance and push "outside" creation. What they discovered undid everything the Elder Elves strived for, and when what dwelt beyond noticed the pinhole the elves had punctured into the outer madness, they invaded reality. Although the Vast Gate was eventually closed, the link between the Far Realm and the Material Plane, a link the multiverse never intended, remained and grew.

In ancient Imaskar, long before Martek came to rule and yet long after the Elder Elves pierced the veils between reality and unreality, a sect of proud and elite wizards who called themselves the Quin (after the Imaskari word for "entitled") discovered ancient tablets bearing fragments of the Elder Elves' magic. Working from these fragments, the Quin became

KNOWLEDGE OF THE KAORTI

The following table shows the results of a Knowledge (the planes) check as it relates to kaortis. As kaortis are rare and alien creatures, all DCs to reveal details about them are 10 higher than normal. Information about kaortis is most likely to come from their escaped victims, experienced planewalkers, and those who glimpsed the malign insanity of the Far Realm. The kaorti appears on page 108 of the *Fiend Folio*.

Knowledge (the planes)

DC	Result
21	This creature is a kaorti, a creature humanoid in shape only. It is an alien to the Material Plane, hostile as much due to its sheer wrongness as due to its inherent cruelty and evil.
26	The kaortis are adept at manipulating arcane magic, and while not all kaortis are sorcerers or wizards, they do all possess spell-like abilities that allow them, among other things, to disguise their appearance with illusions, sap the strength of their foes, and unleash blasts of sickening color to stun or blind their victims.
31	Kaortis are immune to poison, yet ironically, the natural world itself is poisonous to them. Druidic magic is particularly effective against them.
36	Those captured alive by a kaorti are advised to seek death at their own hand, for these monsters can infuse beasts they captivate with their own alien taint, transforming prisoners into monstrously deformed and insane thralls. Humanoids subjected to this procedure instead become kaortis themselves.

obsessed with the concept of reality beyond reality and wondered what great magic might lie hidden in such a realm. Eager to be hailed for what they felt would be a great discovery but wary about repeating the Elder Elves' mistake, they constructed a structure that would transport them to the Far Realm rather than bring the Far Realm to them.

Their work was highly publicized, and as they neared the end of ten years of toil in creating what had come to be known as the Quinspire, the entire nation watched expectantly, hoping the Quin would return with fabulous resources and powers to elevate their proud nation even higher. The Quin made bold promises, and even started work on projects to be finished after their return, but when the time came and the Quin activated their tower, they simply vanished. All that remained were the tower's lowest foundation stones. Eventually, Imaskar forgot the Quin, and then Imaskar itself crumbled and was all but forgotten.

Yet the doom triggered so long ago by the Quin has only now begun. For their experiment had been a success. They arrived safely on the Far Realm, yet they did not remain safe for long—they had vastly underestimated the sheer hostility and alien nature of the Far Realm, and their tiny mote of Material Plane matter was like a beacon. Within minutes of their arrival, a vast and ancient entity called Zurguth, one of those whom the aboleths know as the Elder Evils, came to investigate the disturbance. Yet so potent was Zurguth's existence that its very proximity changed the Quin and their works. They were transformed into something new, and when Zurguth arrived and turned its mind to them, it found nothing to see, for nothing remained of the Quin but their warped Far Realm translation. They had become the first of the kaortis.

For untold eons, the kaortis dwelt within the Far Realm, yet deep within their now-alien minds remained a seed of memory. When their alien curiosity finally drove them to investigate this memory, they found traces of the Material Plane too minute for Zurguth to notice, but not quite so small to escape the kaortis' own investigations. When they used their magic to trace these fragments back to their source, they discovered what, to them, was a new realm—a realm so inimical to them that they could have but one reaction: a consuming urge to overwhelm and transform. When the kaortis finish with our world, the Far Realm will be all that remains.

PHYSIOLOGY OF THE KAORTI

Although the kaorti might appear to be humanoid, they are not. The shape of their forms is little more than an accident, just as one might be able to coax mold to grow in artificial paths, so did the presence of Zurguth use the Quin's human frames as a matrix.

A kaorti's resemblance to a human breaks down quickly once viewed in detail. Their bodies are painfully thin and wet with alien excretions that serve more as blood than sweat. Hands and feet are long and distended, with digits that seem connected not by rigid bone but flexible strips of resin and cartilage, allowing their fingers to bend in unnatural directions. Yet it is in the kaorti's face where one can see the greatest echo of Zurguth's alien presence, for the shiny black spheres that serve them as eyes and the bony ridges of ivory-colored hardened resin that serve them as teeth give the viewer a tiny hint of the appearance of what forged them from sane flesh.

Kaortis have no need to eat or sleep, for these are diversions mortals use to replenish their bodies and minds. Rather, kaortis exist from the outside in. A kaorti's body is in a state of constant self-consumption and replenishment, as the ooze that coats their bodies gathers unknown resources from the environment and then hardens into a shell-like but flexible "skin." This shell is slowly drawn into their cores by strange and hideous sucking and chewing organs

KAORTI 3.5

The kaorti detailed on pages 108–110 of the *Fiend Folio* are, for the most part, usable with the 3.5 rules. The one major disconnect between revisions, though, is in their spell-like abilities; spells like *alter self* and *reduce* no longer affect outsiders. When running an encounter with kaortis in a 3.5 game, you should substitute their spell-like abilities with the following:

1/day—*color spray, comprehend languages, disguise self, feather fall, ray of enfeeblement, spider climb.*

Disguise self lets kaortis continue to masquerade as humans while harvesting thralls, while replacing *reduce* with *comprehend languages* gives them the capacity to understand languages spoken or written by their prey; kaortis have little interest in communicating with their victims until they become kaortis themselves, but they find the ability to understand things like road signs or directions helpful.

designed to cannibalize and recreate the green fluid that serves them as blood. Deep within the kaorti's torso is a pressurized reservoir of this reeking fluid (an organ mistaken by some scholars as a heart). Tangles of arteries run along their arms to pores along the inner surface of their fingers so they might secrete their blood as tools. It might be easiest to think of the kaorti's "heart" as a forge that transforms its outer body into the resinous "building blocks" of Far Realm matter, stuff the kaorti use to not only create their armor and weapons but to build their cysts.

The resin also serves an important role for kaorti invaders, for the Material Plane is poison to them. An unprotected kaorti can survive only for a few hours or days on the Material Plane before the non-resin parts of its physiology are scoured away. The first kaortis to invade the Material Plane learned this weakness the hard way and their deaths served as an object lesson for those who came later. On the Material Plane, kaorti explorers wear chitinous bodysuits made of resin, often sculpting horns, ridges, and spikes upon their shoulders, faces, and torsos to make their appearance all the more horrific.

PSYCHOLOGY AND SOCIETY OF THE KAORTI

Little is known of how the kaortis exist in the Far Realm, but on the Material Plane their society is brutally simple and efficient. Little interests the kaortis other than the transformation of what is natural into what is theirs—everything in a kaorti-held region exists in some way to perpetuate this one driving urge.

An initial group of kaortis invading the Material Plane is known as a cyst pilgrimage; this exploratory band consists of 10–20 kaorti and 1–3 thralls (typically pseudonatural creatures harvested from a similar Material Plane region to the one they are invading). The goal of a cyst pilgrimage is to establish a beachhead on the Material Plane, to create a cyst of kaortis resin that blocks out the harmful effects of the Material Plane and gives their kin a safe fortress to stage further colonization and transformation efforts. Kaorti resin suits are costly and time consuming to create, so typically a cyst pilgrimage only consists of a few kaortis who seek out a remote or hidden area to begin their work. Pilgrimages lucky enough to have access to urquirshs (see Minions of the Kaorti) can establish large cysts in a relatively short time, but most pilgrimages must make do with what they can secrete on their own.

When a kaorti pilgrimage is sent into the Material Plane, the trip is one-way; there's no return portal for them to retreat to if things turn sour. This is to prevent their enemies on the Material Plane from being able to strike at their unknown fortresses just on the other side as much as it is to prevent the Material Plane from leaking into their world. Yet the kaortis do not view this as a disadvantage, for their method of procreation is as swift as it is horrifying.

Once a cyst is established (typically a network of cavelike tubes and chambers deep underground or in remote wildernesses, but rarely in areas close to urban regions), the kaortis begin their harvest. Their spell-like abilities allow them to cloak themselves in illusions, allowing them to walk among humanity, where they can pick and choose their victims. Initially, they choose their victims from the dregs of society: vagabonds, prostitutes, scoundrels, and street urchins—those whose vanishing won't be noted. They return to their cyst, where after 8 hours of surgery and injection of kaortic fluids (typically delivered through 8-hour bites, but sometimes through tools like wrist lancets), their abductees become new kaortis, immediately capable of capturing and transforming others. Left unchecked, a kaortic incursion can very rapidly become a major invasion.

Kaortis take to arcane magic, especially sorcery, and many become rogues or fighters with ease (although their natural weakness make them poor melee combatants), but to date, no kaorti clerics, druids, rangers, or other divine casters have been encountered. This is likely a psychological issue, for the kaortis have no concept of faith in anything but themselves.

MINIONS OF THE KAORTI

Where kaortis are found, so too are their monstrous minions. While creatures transformed into pseudonatural thralls are far and above the most common of kaorti minions, they frequently create other monsters to serve as mounts or guardians as well, shaping and sculpting the warped flesh of several creatures at once, using them as clay to form more powerful minions than might be achieved by a simple kaortic transformation alone. These transformations take place in bubbling pools of raw resin deep within kaortic cysts and generally take several days to complete. The three most commonly created minions are the destructive insectoid rukanyrs (used as living siege engines and tanks in large conflicts;

Fiend Folio, 144), the alien and horrific skybleeders (used as mounts and magical support; *Fiend Folio*, 156), and the savage and ruinous kaortic hulks (used as shock troops; DRAGON #330).

Yet not all of the monstrous minions of the kaorti are their creations—many are denizens of the Far Realm, brought along on their initial forays or called in through portals deep within a kaortic cyst. These creatures, such as half-farspawn (*Lords of Madness*, 151), amoebic crawlers (DRAGON #330), and nightseeds (DRAGON #330) are, if anything, even more alien than creatures sculpted from once-normal beings, for they are wholly of the Far Realm.

Perhaps the most commonly utilized creature is the vile and foul-smelling urquirsh, an abominable miscarriage of flesh that looks like nothing more than a writhing tangle of spurting tubes, greasy entrails, and dangling arms held aloft by three long spidery legs. These horrific monsters are notable not just for their detestable shape and smell, but for the fact that when they are brought to places outside of the Far Realm, their alien cores implode, creating a tiny but mobile rift between realities back to the Far Realm. These rifts always lead to the tidal washes of the Amoebic Sea, providing the urquirsh with an endless supply of resin that the kaorti can use to coat large regions, altering the environment so they can exist within with relative ease.

KAORTI EQUIPMENT

Kaortis are masters at using their resin to create organic tools, weapons, and armor. Kaorti resin items appear alien and horrific, and their use is sometimes not readily apparent from their appearance. The resin suit and the ribbon dagger (*Fiend Folio*, 110) are the two most common kaorti items, but others like those detailed here exist as well.

Wristlancet: This purple device is worn on the wrist and triggered by a flexible stalk that protrudes from its midsection. At one end, a flexible resin sac can store poison or disease-laced fluid, while protruding from the other end is a rigid hollow spine. When triggered as a standard action, the spine shoots out to a distance of up to 2 feet and the fluid within is dispensed reflexively. A kaorti can use this device to inject a target with whatever fluid is stored inside by successfully hitting a target with the device. A wristlancet is an exotic light weapon that deals 1d2 points of piercing damage on a hit, with a critical multiplier of ×3. Its wrist-mounted straps make it difficult to disarm, granting the wielder a +4 bonus on checks made to resist being disarmed. Likewise, it leaves the user's hand free to hold other weapons or tools. *Cost:* 100 gp. *Weight:* 1 lb.

Green Rapture: Introduced to a creature via consumption or injection, a dose of this pale green poison (which is distilled from the resin of newly created kaortis) deals 1d2 points of Constitution damage if a DC 14 Fortitude save is failed. One minute later, the DC 14 Fortitude save must be made again to avoid paralysis for 2d6 minutes. As long as a creature remains poisoned by the green rapture and retains the Constitution damage or is paralyzed, the poison acts as a catalyst for kaortic transformations. Such a victim subjected to a kaorti's vile transformation ability makes the change into kaorti or pseudonatural creature after only 2d6 rounds of contact. *Cost* 300 gp. *Weight:* 1 lb.

URQUIRSH **CR 4**

Always NE Small aberration (extraplanar)

Init +10; **Senses** blindsense 60 ft., sightless; Listen +3, Spot +3

Aura stench (20 ft.)

Languages Kaorti (cannot speak)

AC 17, touch 17, flat-footed 11 (+1 size, +6 Dex)

hp 39 (6 HD)

Immune acid, disease, poison

Fort +4, **Ref** +10, **Will** +8

Weakness vulnerability to electricity

Spd 60 ft., climb 60 ft.

Melee 3 claws +11 (1d6–1)

Base Atk +4; **Grp** –1

Atk Options vile spray

Special Actions acid bomb

Abilities Str 8, Dex 22, Con 15, Int 5, Wis 16, Cha 13

SQ death burst, freedom of movement, internal rift

Feats Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Weapon Finesse

Skills Climb +17, Jump +21, Use Magic Device +20

Environment any (near kaortic cysts)

Organization solitary, pair, or wash (3–9)

Treasure none

Advancement 7–12 HD (Medium), 13–18 HD (Large), 19–24 HD (Huge), 25–30 HD (Gargantuan), 31+ HD (Colossal)

Acid Bomb (Su) Once every 1d4 rounds, an urquirsh can generate a small globe of concentrated acid extracted from its planar rift. This globe has a range of 90 feet and explodes in a burst of rancid acid, filling a 20-foot-radius burst and inflicting 4d6 points of acid damage to every target in the area. A DC 15 Reflex save halves the damage, but if this save is failed, the creature is also nauseated by the horrific stink for 1d4 rounds if he fails a DC 15 Fortitude save. An advanced urquirsh's acid bomb deals an additional +1d6 points of acid damage for every 2 Hit Dice it possesses. The save DCs are Constitution-based.

Death Burst (Su) When an urquirsh is slain, its internal rift to the Far Realm bursts before it closes. Any creature caught within this 10-foot-radius spray must make a DC 15 Fortitude save or be nauseated

ZURGUTH, THE FEASTING VAST

The Far Realm is home to ancient entities of vast power. Although not technically deities themselves, their powers approach and might even eclipse the gods. They existed before divinity, and will likely do so beyond the advent of the last deity's death. Respect for these entities is as close to religion as the aboleths come—saner scholars whisper of them collectively as the Elder Evils.

As with the majority of these cosmic entities, Zurguth does not dwell on the Material Plane. His influence is felt there, though, primarily through the actions of his accidental creations, the kaortis. The kaortis do not count divine spellcasters among their ilk, nor do they erect temples in Zurguth's image, yet those who escape the vile transformation of a kaortic embrace speak of memories that are not theirs. Memories of drowning in a sea whose water can think, of fluids thicker than flesh that still run like mud, of vast islands heaving out of an endless bulk only to open eyes and split open into bottomless tooth-lined throats, of mountains of parasitic creatures heaving along a landscape of shuddering mobility too huge to be a planet and too mobile to be something dead or dying. Few who escape the kaortic transformation sleep well ever again, for many fear that when they die, it is not the afterlife that waits for them, but the infinite wet embrace of Zurguth, the Feasting Vast.

for 1d4 rounds. A *delay poison* or *neutralize poison* spell removes the effect from a nauseated creature. Creatures with immunity to poison are unaffected, and creatures resistant to poison receive their normal bonus on their saving throws. Worse, the death burst has a 50% chance of summoning another urquirsh into the spot previously occupied by the first urquirsh. A summoned urquirsh does not generate a death burst when it is slain, nor can its death trigger the summoning of a third urquirsh. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Freedom of Movement (Su) An urquirsh is constantly affected by a *freedom of movement* effect that cannot be dispelled.

Internal Rift (Su) An urquirsh that enters an area that blocks extraplanar travel is cut off from its internal planar rift to the Far Realm and takes a –4 penalty on all attack rolls, saving throws, and skill checks as long as this condition persists. It cannot use its acid bomb, death burst, or vile spray abilities while within such an area.

Sightless (Ex) An urquirsh has no eyes, and is thus immune to gaze attacks, visual effects, illusions, and other attack forms that rely on sight.

Stench (Ex) An urquirsh's odor is abominably offensive to all creatures not of the Far Realm. Any such creature within 20 feet of an urquirsh must succeed on a DC 15 Fortitude save or be sickened for 1d6+4 minutes. A creature that successfully saves cannot be affected again by the same urquirsh's stench for 24 hours. A *delay poison* or *neutralize poison* spell removes the effect from a sickened creature. Creatures with immunity to poison are unaffected, and creatures resistant to poison receive their normal bonus on their saving throws. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Vile Spray (Ex) An urquirsh spews a relentless spray of vile otherworldly ooze, channeled in through its internal rift to the Far Realm. This foul-smelling ooze coats everything within 20 feet of the urquirsh, quickly hardening to a flexible, rubbery texture. Creatures in its area must make a DC 15 Reflex save or take a –4 conditional penalty to their Dexterity. Being hit by and failing multiple Reflex saves does not result in a higher penalty. The ooze is permeable and can be breathed through and does not hamper speech. The stuff can be peeled off of a creature with 1d4+1 rounds of work, though one covered in the slime cannot effectively remove it from his own body. The ooze hardens slowly, with the imparted Dexterity penalty increasing by 4 points every hour. A creature who accumulates a penalty equal to or in excess of his Dexterity score is rendered immobile as the stuff dries completely; further Dexterity penalties do not accrue, but without external help, the victim can only escape the resin cage with a DC 22 Strength or Escape Artist check. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Skills An urquirsh has a +18 racial bonus on Climb checks and a +10 racial bonus on Jump and Use Magic Device checks.

The River Styx

By F. Wesley Schneider • illustrated by Ben Wootten

Having swept across the planes, the Savage Tide flows into the dreaded Styx, the memory-draining river of the Lower Planes. Aiding in traversing these fiendish waters, this article series presents you, the player, with the tips, trick, and tools you need to survive. While the pages of *Dungeon* present the DM with every cunning plot twist and vile monster needed to run the Savage Tide Adventure Path, *Dragon* offers details and options to better resist its deadly undertow. This month's installment provides you with a tour of the River Styx and suggestions on where you might travel to rally support in the coming battle against the Prince of Demons himself.

Adventure Tie

This installment of Savage Tidings links to the tenth episode of the Savage Tide Adventure Path, "Enemies of My Enemy," presented in *Dungeon* #149.

The River Styx

From the screaming springs of Pandemonium to its freezing death in the depths of Acheron, the River Styx cuts a deadly planar highway through the most depraved and terrifying realms in the multiverse. Yet, those knowledgeable in matters secret and profane know that, for all its horrors, the deadly river's memory-stealing waters lead to great opportunities for travelers brave enough to embrace them.

What follows is a guide to several of the realms touched by the River Styx. While not all inclusive (especially when one considers the infinite layers of the Abyss), these details highlight the best-known sights and dangers one sailing the Styx might encounter. Aside from these common descriptions and musings, those who possess useful Knowledge skills might know obscure facts about each location and in turn reveal potential aid in the fight against Demogorgon (see the skill check at the end of each location description for appropriate skills and DCs).

Pandemonium

From the Windswept Depths' first layer, Pandesmos, gurgle forth the headwaters of the River Styx. None can be sure what unique factors causes the river to spring from this plane, but countless theories attempt to account for the mystery. One legend claims the Styx's taint seeps from a frozen place called Winter's Hall. From there, a mixture of infinite melting snow, godly poison, and the blood of an endlessly tortured deity mixes and flows through Pandemonium's scream-scoured earth in a ceaseless infusion of evil.

DC 35 Knowledge (the planes) or Knowledge (religion): Those seeking allies in Pandemonium might seek out Gorellik, the original, dethroned god of the gnoll race. Although rare communities of gnolls still honor him, Gorellik has been reduced to a demigod as his people have turned to worshiping the demon lord Yeenoghu. Despairing, the disenfranchised deity often comes to the River Styx to drink of its waters and forget his past, but his remaining powers are such that the forgetfulness rarely lasts for long. A sly tongue might convince mangy Gorellik that by defeating Demogorgon and claiming the Prince of Demon's throne, he would become more than a match for Yeenoghu and potentially win back his people.

The Abyss

The River Styx enters the infinite evil infinites of the Abyss as a trickle, but explodes forth a raging torrent. To many of these layers the Styx's passage brings visitors and victims, and the tales of those who survive their journeys make these realms some of the best known and most cosmopolitan in all the Abyss.

Pazunia

The Plain of Infinite Portals, the first layer of the Abyss, is arguably the most welcoming to non-fiends (though, here "welcoming" merely implies "less innately murderous"). As the Styx meanders through the sweltering plane, numerous forks lead to lower layers and—more often than not—unspeakable dangers. The best known divergence leads to Shendilavri near the iron fortress of Vanelon.

DC 30 Knowledge (the planes): Near a bend in the river, haunted by flights of heckling quasits, a clustered knot of bone docks forms a grotesque marina called the Fateless Harborage. Operated by three opportunistic marraenoloths called the Bosuns, the harborage is the closest "safe" dock on the Styx to the fortress-town of Broken Reach. The Bosuns allow any ship that pays 1,000 gp per day to dock and do all they can do protect the vessels in their charge—unless substantially bribed. While more than a day's travel from the harbor over the red, sun-scarred plains, Broken Reach holds a portal to the Outlands gatetown of Plague-Mort. Should allies from beyond the Abyss be unable to magically travel to the plane, the fortress's portal is where they most likely enter.

Should the PCs seek the aid of the succubus Red Shroud again, she is not in Broken Reach. None know where she has departed to, nor for how long, but her disappearance doubtlessly has some connection to Shami-Amourae's release.

The Blood Shallows

A reeking, poisoned bog of blood and rotting plants, the River Styx is just one of the toxins that taint the 81st layer of the Abyss, the Blood Shallows. Languorously, the Styx creeps through the diseased, blood swamp, flowing round several of the layer's soggy spits of land—each coveted and futilely battled over by desperate warlords and bands of petitioners. Shallows make it easy to mire a vessel in the gore-soaked fens, and desperate demons quickly set to salvaging anything slow enough to catch—whether ships for wood or crews for food.

WHAT DO YOU KNOW: THE RIVER STYX

Legendary and ageless, the River Styx has flown through the Lower Planes for as long as there have been realms for it to taint. Any character with knowledge of the planes or tales of the afterlife is likely to know details about the river of loss.

Knowledge (the planes)

DC	Result
10	All who die must pass over the River Styx to enter their afterlife.
15	The River Styx winds its way through the Lower Planes. Any who touch or drink from the river forget all they ever knew.
20	Deadly creatures that even the most powerful denizens of the Lower Planes dread lurk beneath the Styx's dark waters, along with numerous aquatic races of devils and demons.
25	The master of the River Styx is Charon, a boatman who decides where the river flows and who has leave to travel its waters.
30	The Styx begins in Pandemonium and ends in Acheron. Along its waters numerous powerful creatures and reclusive legends make their homes.

STYGIAN WATERS

The Styx is the river of forgetfulness. Anyone who drinks or so much as touches the river's infernal waters must make a DC 17 Fortitude save or forget all he ever knew, his Intelligence and Charisma dropping to 1. Even if one successfully makes this save, he still loses all memory of the last 8 hours. In either case, this forgetfulness is permanent and can only be cured by the spells *heal*, *limited wish*, *miracle*, or *wish*.

PANDEMONIUM
THE ABYSS
PAZUNIA
THANATOS
BLOOD SHALLOWS
SHADOWDAEMON
WRAITH KINGDOM
SIGHING CLIFFS
SHEDARKALAH
GORANTHIS
CARCERI
HADES
GEHENNA
BAATOR
ACHERON

DC 35 Knowledge (the planes): The Blood Shallows hold nothing of value and could easily end the voyage of even the most daring travelers. An obese nalfeshnee warlord called Basthilwhim the Leaking commands a small army of rutterkin from a rotting wooden fort along the Styx's route. His minions attack anything that passes on the river, eager to please their Bog Lord.

Thanatos

Those who sail the icy stretch of the Styx on Thanatos, the 113th layer of the Abyss, risk becoming trapped forever within the freezing, death-haunted realm of Orcus, Prince of Undeath. The Styx proves increasingly deadly as one travels deeper into the frozen realm. Bergs of ice and frozen bodies make navigating the Styx slow and treacherous, as do incursions by waterlogged zombies and other undead.

DC 30 Knowledge (the planes): Travelers to Thanatos might find unlikely respite in the capitol of the layer, Lachrymosa, the geyser-heated Cauldron of Tears. Although populated by servants of Orcus and doomed petitioners, strangers who keep a low profile are unlikely to face frequent attacks. Aside from the frozen harbor straights, the first peril travelers likely face upon reaching the city is Sensiner, the portmaster of Lachrymosa, a bloated zovvut (*Monster Manual II*, 58) with an oversized goat's eye that stares from the center of his forehead. Any who cannot bribe or convince the hulking fiend that their business in the city will somehow benefit him find their ship crippled and left to drift helplessly down the Styx. Regardless of the city's perils, Lachrymosa is the nearest port to Everlost, Orcus's throne.

Despite the dangers of Thanatos, the benefits might well outweigh them. Few demons in all the Abyss despise Demogorgon more than Orcus, and the Prince of the Undead likely requires little convincing to go to war against his reviled rival.

Shedaklah

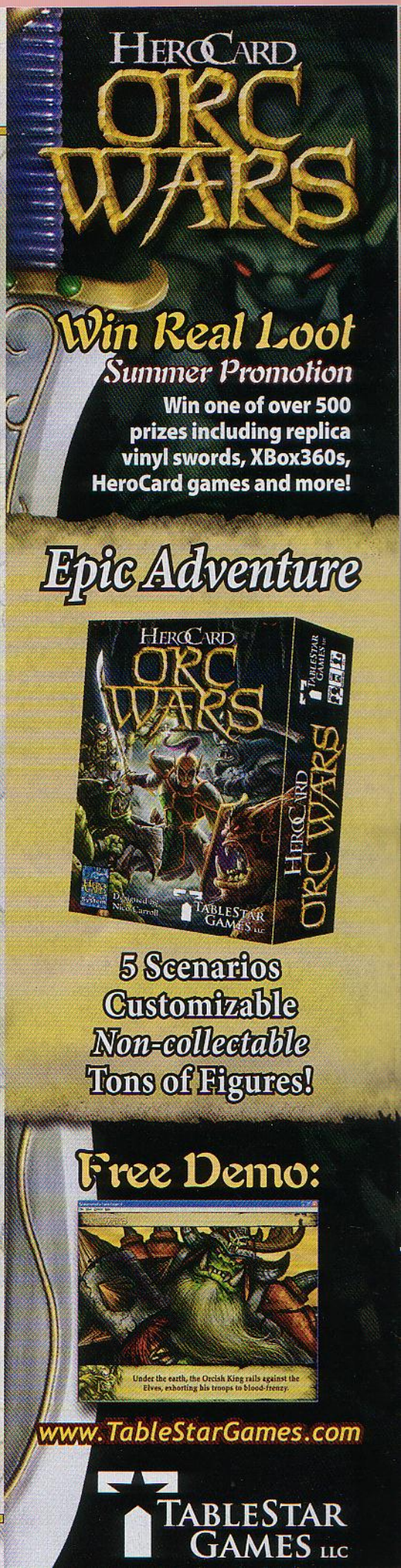
Those who ply the Styx to the 222nd layer of the Abyss—the contested, festering realm of the demon lords Juiblex and Zuggtmoy—are presented with a dangerous option as the amnesiac river branches in twain. In one direction, the dark waters wind through the wildest rotting mires of the Queen of Fungi's demesne. In the other, the Styx forms the boundary between the plane's two warring realms.

Those who travel through Zuggtmoy's realm find the river thickening with floating molds and debris, perceptively slowing as fungal shallows and gigantic, fallen mushrooms make the already deadly waters frustratingly treacherous to navigate. A tribe of stunted, parasite-riddled cannibals and the mindless horrors of the swamp scour the surrounding bogs, hungry for anything beside the memory-stealing fungi that share the swampy waters' curse of forgetfulness.

Daring the path between Zuggtmoy's realm and the Slime Pits of Juiblex, travelers risk provoking the guardians of both disgusting lands. On one shore, deadly fungi, gigantic phycomids, and lurking rukarazyll (*Monster Manual II*, 181) form a living bulwark defending the moldering wastes beyond. Toward the other shore, the river jellifies with acidic and predatory slime.

DC 30 Knowledge (the planes): As Zuggtmoy fancies herself a cosmopolitan queen, a partially sunken stone pier marks the halfway point of the border river's progression through the layer. Here, a powerful vathugu called Mugalis guards a small, one-way portal to Zuggtmoy's Palace. Those who defeat the demon or convince him of their worth might be able to treat with Zuggtmoy herself. Although she has long considered herself an ally of the Prince of Demons and will likely not war against him, bribery would do much to secure her noninterference in the coming conflict.

(For more details on Shedaklah and the unattributed creatures, see the



"Demonomicon of Iggwilv: Zuggtmoy" in *Dragon* #337.)

Shendilavri

The deceptive Abyssal paradise of Malcanthet, the Succubus Queen, Shendilavri's flowering fields and marble monuments hide untold depths of depravity and betrayal. The River Styx briefly passes through seemingly Elysian landscape only briefly, flowing through the decadent city of Miomanta. Within this city of decadent and debased artisans live Malcanthet's most favored minions, the Radiant Sisters, as well as the Succubus Queen's summer palace.

DC 30 Knowledge (the planes): Those traveling to Shendilavri can easily depart the flow of the Styx and sail freely upon the Scarlet Sea. From there, travellers might journey to the debauched marble city of Rivenheart, where the Succubus Queen holds court. While it is said she has schemed against the Prince of Demons for some time, Malcanthet is not one to commit herself freely to a plot—even one she has personally orchestrated. Cautious and subtle, her aid most likely takes the form of tools and secrets, but their price must undoubtedly be paid in flesh.

(For more details on Shendilavri see the "Demonomicon of Iggwilv: Malcanthet" in *Dragon* #353.)

Goranthis

The Styx pours into the 597th layer of the Abyss, the True Paradise of Goranthis—the infinite pleasure palace of the demon prince Socothbenoth—via a pornographically sculpted waterfall. Those who traverse the falls find themselves drifting past the marble banks of the Saturnalia, a vast suggestive sculpture garden where all manner of sybarites and voluptuaries bask within full view of the Persuader's Palace of Quivering Flesh. Although only the beauteous damned are permitted to tempt those who sail upon the Styx, from high within leaking brass minarets gasp and scowl the flesh-bound slave-things and endlessly altered elite of Socothbenoth's perverted court. While the perfumed air and honeyed coos of courtesans on flowered pleasure skiffs might suggest that Goranthis truly is a hypocrisy-purged heaven, in the True Paradise horror is found not in fire and savage forms, but in seductive glances, false beauty, and the flesh-scouring delight of insatiable deviancy.

DC 30 Knowledge (the planes): While few know the extent of leather-clad Socothbenoth's power, his recent incursions into Fraz-Urb'luu's temporarily abandoned realm suggest that his legions of pleasure slaves might easily be galvanized into conquering hordes. Despite the Persuader's potential to provide aid, Demogorgon's infamous bestiality and virility ignite Socothbenoth's demented lusts. A fantastic boon would have to be offered for the Demon Prince of Perversion to forsake one of his most debased fantasies.

Carceri

The Styx means salvation on the prison plane of Carceri. As many portals lead into the plane but few leave, the constant flow of the Styx offers a grim sort of hope for any who would dare escape, even if this freedom means fleeing to either the Abyss or Hades. The river's flow infuses the first layer of Carceri, Orthrys, a boggy realm infested by mosquitoes and lying petitioners—most of whom would say anything for a chance to escape.

DC 40 Knowledge (the planes): As the Styx passes through the first layer of Carceri it nears Mount Orthrys, the prison of the titan Cronus. Nearby, in the center of the river, floats the barren island prison of the titan Coeus, said to be the favored son of a dead goddess of cunning and supposedly the strategist behind the ancient titan rebellion against the gods. Coeus has sat, magically bound, upon this island for untold millennia and has accepted that he'll never escape his prison with his vast memory intact. Any who can bring the titan something to while away his eternity, or even offer him temporary respite from his boredom, might coax from him some secret he remembers from the multiverse's youth.

Hades

In the Gray Waste of Hades, the Styx crosses the trackless gloom known as Oinos. A battlefield of the endless Blood War, fiends ravage the already bleak wasteland, filling the dour land with the screams of war. As the Styx pours through the layer, it comes within sight of the Wasting Tower, Khin-Oin, the 20-mile-tall bastion of yugoloth depravity ruled over by a powerful ultraloth prince called the Oinoloth.

DC 30 Knowledge (the planes): Although the Oinoloth and his mercenary armies might seem tempting allies in the battle against Demogorgon, only a fool would call upon the master of the Wasting Tower. No mortal could offer the ultraloth prince a fraction of what Demogorgon would for selling out his enemies—a fact the Oinoloth would immediately indulge. Instead, travelers might seek out the aid of the witch Iggwilv, who dwells in a mansion along the Styx and whose knowledge of demons, their ways, and their weakness, is without peer.

Gehenna

Among the most treacherous cascades of the Styx are those that crash down the volcano-layer of Khalas, the first layer of Gehenna. Endless waterfalls, sundering rocks, and volcanic flows means that travel requires both masterful seamanship and probably more than a little magic. Beyond these polluted rapids, Gehenna is home to the lords of the yugoloths and the Styx flows directly through the realm of the Lich-Lord Melif. None of these villains welcome strangers.

DC 35 Knowledge (the planes): Without magical aid, a vessel is likely to be dashed to splinters or set aflame upon entering Gehenna. Magic or several DC 40 profession (sailor) check are required to safely navigate

the Bleak Eternity's crashing falls. Some yugoloths offer to sell charms and spells that magically protect ships daring their home plane's torrents, but these magics more often than not prove faulty or deliver vessels into fiendish traps.

Baator

In Avernus, the first layer of the Nine Hells, the Styx swells with the blood that seeps from the plane itself. Here, endless hordes of armed and armored devils muster upon fire-blasted plains, preparing for invasions either as part of the Blood War or diabolical incursions upon unfortunate Material Planar worlds. While most of the lesser ranks of devils ignore travelers upon the river, osyluths view all nondevils upon the plane as spies and drag captives to the Bronze Citadel, fortress of Bel, Lord of the First.

DC 25 Knowledge (the planes): While the devils always eagerly take advantage of the infighting between the demon lords of the Abyss—taking every opportunity to gain ground in the endless Blood War—those expecting their aid must first prove that the current discord and plots against Demogorgon are greater than the plane's usual chaos. Even if such proof is presented, though, it's unlikely the information would reach Bel, and even less likely that he would act on the word of mortals without an assured and near-invaluable gain.

Acheron

Where the Styx turns deadly in Gehenna it turns murderous in Acheron, the plane of crashing metal and endless war. The Styx has little in the way of a set course, cascading miles through open air only to slide across open metal plains like rain upon a rooftop, then plummet again. The Styx reaches its end in Acheron, surging across layers of metal to freeze in the endless black ice of Ocanthus.

DC 40 Knowledge (the planes): No vessel incapable of flight can survive a journey through Acheron for long. One cube called Reizmis has been trapped in the massive waterfall created by the Styx's initial falls into the plane for centuries, spinning endlessly in the black water. Heavily rusted by the water, the iron has become suffused with the memory-stealing properties of the Styx. Members of the planar faction known as the Doomguard mine the lower reaches of the cube, shielded from the crashing water. From a flying black galleon, the Doomguard craft this metal into consumptive burst weapons (see *Planar Handbook*, 79), shipping it to faction redoubts across the planes, but also selling these weapons to any visitor tenacious enough to reach them at deeply discounted prices.

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Volo's Guide

war upon the sands

Well met again, gentle readers!

Yes, 'tis Volothamp Geddarm, explorer of and highly esteemed commentator upon all the Realms, famous from one end of Faerûn to the other as "Volo." I present myself once more at thy service, this time in the unfolding of lore on Mulhorand and Unther, the large and elder lands that are the heart of "the Old Empires."

Neither is among the most hospitable of lands to outlanders. Yet they are large and rich and old, seething with centuries of secrets, feuds, and intrigues. Not to mention undead who keep old disputes "alive" and scores that still need settling, from beyond the grave.

At great peril I explored them, to bring back this lore. Should I fall silent, worry not: I shall return again, when least expected, with more tales to tell. I always come back.

Volo

FORGOTTEN REALMS

by Brian Cortijo, with special introduction by Ed Greenwood
illustrated by John Gravato • cartography by Rob Lazzeratti

When the great empire of the Imaskari fell in –2488 DR, it birthed two nations in its wake: Unther and Mulhorand. At first falling into conflict, it was some five centuries before the two empires agreed to a common border along the River of Swords. Ruled by the manifestations and incarnations of their gods, a number of deicides within both pantheons (most occurring in the Orc-gate Wars of –1071 to –1069 DR) slowly reduced the numbers of Unther's gods, until only three remained: Gilgeam, the Supreme Ruler of Unther; Ramman, god of order and war; and Tiamat, Nemesis of the Gods. Ramman was slain during the Time of Troubles by his rival Hoar, the exiled Untheri god of vengeance once known as Assuran. Gilgeam fell soon after to the talons of Tiamat, leaving Unther weakened, leaderless, and—for the first time in more than two millennia—free of tyranny.

This freedom did not last long. The forces of Mulhorand now control nearly two thirds of Unther, including its former capital of Unthalass. Zealots of Tiamat, Anhur, Hoar, Selûne, and Horus-Re all contest for control and influence over the future of Unther and its people. Rebels and neutral parties struggle with the decision of which faction to support. Slaves cry for freedom, and every Untheri family looks elsewhere for heroes to break the years-long stalemate and carve a road for Unther to follow.

THE POWERS

For four millennia, Unther was ruled directly by its gods. Although Enlil has departed, Gilgeam has been slain, and the remainder of its pantheon is either dead or merged into the Faerûnian pantheon, the faithful of gods both living and dead still vie for the future of Unther and its ancient relics.

church of Tiamat

Tiamat earned her title, Nemesis of the Gods, through her constant antagonism of the various godheads of Unther. It was she who destroyed Gilgeam's manifestation on Faerûn and who finally slew the Supreme Ruler of Unther. In fact, it is only through the constant, fearful veneration of the people of Unther that Tiamat's worship persists in the Realms at all.

To Tiamat and her followers, Unther is the rightful spoils of the Dragon Queen, earned through centuries of patience, careful planning, and bloody conflict. Like any wyrm jealously protecting her hoard, Tiamat carefully examines challengers to her prize, evaluating the threat they pose and determining whether to exterminate or toy with such interlopers. Tiamat's forces raid Mulhorandi camps in the south, confounding many of their plans and providing a constant nuisance.

Despite Tiamat's dominance, however, Unther is far from prepared to fall beneath the rule of the Dark Lady. In the north, the high priestess Tiglath (LN female Mulan human cleric 16/fighter 3) heads the church in Messemprar, but counsels her followers to a moderate, deliberate approach to their recruitment. In Unthalass, Deiros Forktongue (NE male Mulan human cleric 12) leads the worship of Tiamat, but does so poorly and with little control over the disparate

subjects. Shudu-Ab (LE female Mulan human cleric 18), both former lieutenant and rival to Tiglath, waits patiently in Unthalass, observing the failures of Deiros and waiting for the time to reclaim the church of Tiamat from its current high priestess.

clerics of gilgeam

The faithful of Gilgeam—his priests, loyal generals, and other favored nobles—fled Unthalass following the news of their lord's death, taking refuge in the Citadel of Black Ash, a fortress claimed by the god centuries ago and converted into his stronghold. In 1372 DR, a rush of volcanic activity blanketed the citadel in ash, killing most inside and gravely scarring the rest. Only a handful of clerics remained alive, most too weak or young to mount any defense against Mulhorandi forces or Untheri rebels craving revenge for centuries of abuses.

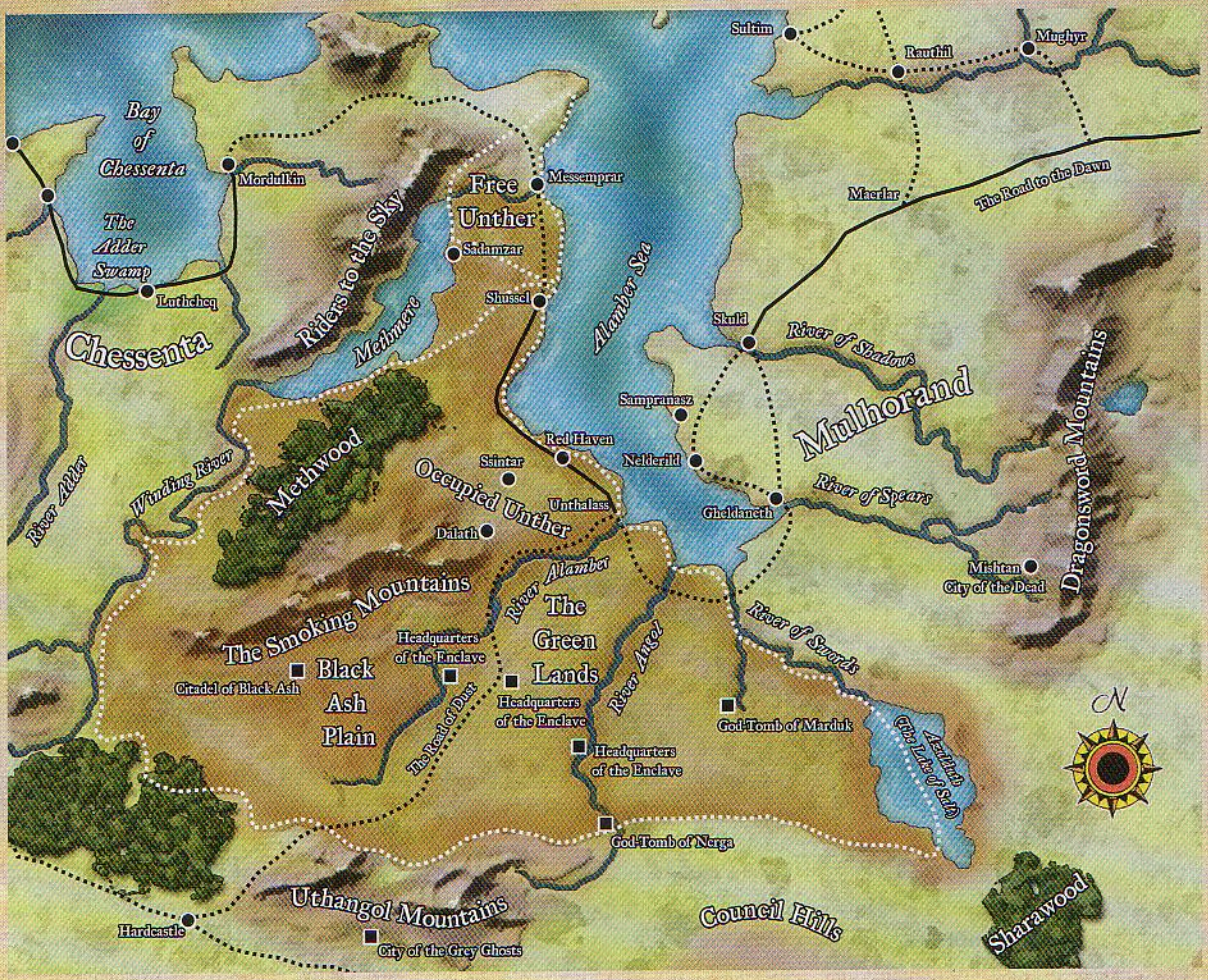
More recently, the dying faith of Gilgeam failed in an attempt to raise its deity through the use of flesh from the corpses of the various gods of Unther. Worshipers of Tiamat and their allies destroyed the god-born creature and the priests who created it, leaving only scattered remnants of the once-powerful church hidden throughout the country. Aside from revenge or for grim amusement, few consider the remaining clerics worth pursuing.

Shuruppak the Reaper (NE male Mulan human fighter 20/rogue 3/wizard 7), once-Chosen of Gilgeam, has not been seen since Midsummer. Neither, however, has his corpse, so his disappearance is of no comfort to anyone.

whispers of hoar

If the worshipers of Tiamat are embittered by the lack of Untheri devotion to the Five-Headed Queen, the priests of Hoar are relishing in their newfound freedom. Hoar's faith is a small but vengeful one, striking at Untheri and Mulhorandi foes alike. Mulhorand feels the sting of Hoar's faithful in Unthalass, where the armies of Anhur hold power and are attempting to completely subjugate the native population. In the Greenfields and on the shores of the River Alamber, a trio of assassins calling themselves the Three Thunders (LE male Mulan and Turami humans rogue 7/assassin 4) takes divine retribution against those who ally with Mulhorand.

Hoar himself is said to be seeking an emissary within Unther to restore him to his proper place among its people. In the centuries of his exile from the Untheri pantheon (imposed by his hated foe Ramman), Hoar—known as Assuran in Chessentan and older Untheric texts—is only now enjoying the chance to reap his revenge. Although he slew his rival during the Time of Troubles, it is through the just control of Unther—not the defeat of its warmaster—that Assuran can return to his rightful throne. To that end, Hoar's faithful do not reveal themselves unless absolutely necessary, preferring to work through emissaries and go-betweens and presenting themselves as devout, pious clergy working for the betterment of Unther's common people.



The Dead Gods

With the death of Gilgeam, splinter cults of the various dead gods of Unther have begun to reveal themselves. Seldom more than a dozen strong—usually a number of lay worshipers led by one or two clerics who draw power from their fallen deities (see *Lost Empires of Faerûn* for more on worshiping dead gods). They stand watch over the god-tombs of the departed members of the Untheri pantheon, and they occasionally unearth relics and secrets of great magical power. In particular, the cults of Marduk, the god of justice, and Nergal, the god of the underworld, search for holy relics that might one day redeem their nation.

POLITICS

With its central government destroyed and the powerful castes of its past wiped away, Unther is essentially leaderless. Two major political factions—the Northern Wizards of Messemprar and the forces of Mulhorand—contest daily for the future of Unther.

Northern Wizards

This council of Mystran and Ishtari mages comprises the current rulers of the city of Messemprar—and thus, symbolically, all of free Unther. The Northern Wizards see it as their task to defend those Untheri still free of Mulhorand. They must simultaneously fend off Chessentan advances from the west, Mulhorandi gains in the south, and the schemes of the church of Tiamat and other groups from within the city, all while ensuring their people remain secure, fed, and (as a consequence of the other two) loyal.

The Northern Wizards have little influence beyond their attempts to keep Mulhorand and other interests out of what remains of Unther. They are currently allied with the rebels led by Ningal and have reluctantly begun accepting magical and monetary aid from the Red Wizards of Thay—although they still refuse the repeated requests to expand the existing enclave in Messemprar. The Northern Wizards currently have two major goals: to recruit a powerful band of adventurers to break the Mulhorand's stranglehold on provisions from the south and to reconcile their differences with the Enclave of Greenfields (see The People). The wizards' current leader is Shurlash of Messemprar (NG male Mulan human wizard 15/arcane devotee of Mystra 3 [*Players Guide to Faerûn*, 48]).

Mulhorand

The pharaoh of Mulhorand, Horustep III (LG male Mulan human cleric 4/paladin 6 of Horus-Re), is a good man in the awkward position of determining the direction of a nation that for millennia was ruled by gods and their offspring. The first mortal in a line of god-kings, the young pharaoh must contend with an

uncertain future, and a swiftly changing political landscape emerging where once change took decades.

The occupying forces of Mulhorand are nominally commanded by the priesthood of Anhur, who were granted permission by Horustep III to lead their troops into Unther. The true generals of Mulhorand's armies, however, are the Lord Khemenhet (LG male Mulan human paladin 8/glorious servitor of Horus-Re 7 [*Lost Empires of Faerûn*, 13]), who commands the garrison at Unthalass, and the mercenary captain Kendera Steeldice (LG female Chondathan human paladin 11 of the Red Knight), leader of the Gold Swords. While Lord Khemenhet is tasked with restoring order and civilization to the former Untheric capital, Kendera and her soldiers remain in the field, quelling frequent slave rebellions and fighting off attacks from the various factions of native Untheri.

The Anhurite zealot Abasi-Retep (CN male Mulan human fighter 6/pious templar 4 of Anhur [*Complete Divine*, 50]) has begun to gather a stronger, more loyal following among the soldiers of Mulhorand in preparation for the day when a new captain must lead the armies of Anhur.

Thay

Caring nothing for the future of Unther as a nation or as a collection of people, Thay's only interest in the current occupation is the possibility of a renewed Mulhorandi empire—something it emphatically does not wish to see. To that end, the Red Wizards sought (and were refused) a larger enclave in Messemprar, formally requested the establishment of an enclave in Unthalass (also refused), and secretly send magical and monetary aid to Tiamatan and rebel forces in the south.

Thay seeks to prolong the conflict for as long as possible, while preventing a complete defeat of Mulhorand's armies. If Mulhorandi victory is inevitable, reason the Red Wizards, then at least their forces will be depleted enough that a restored empire is an impossibility.

plot hooks

Characters venturing through Mulhorand and Unther might become embroiled in any number of local adventures and intrigues.

- An agent of the Church of Tiamat is looking for an adventuring band to eliminate Lord Khemenhet of Unthalass and pave the way for a Tiamatan uprising in the city. Refusal of the offer leads to an eventual ambush by bandits and a potential run-in with Furifax and his men.
- The Enclave of Greenfields approaches the PCs, hoping to establish a relationship with a group of outsiders with no stake in Unther's political future to discuss a course of action. The courier who approaches the group is actually Isimud in disguise, hoping to determine the attitudes of the adventurers and what side, if any, they plan to take in the conflict.
- Abasi-Retep sends a messenger to the PCs, attempting to recruit them into Anhur's holy crusade to pacify and civilize Unther. The message promises lands, wealth, and glorious battle to any experienced adventurers willing to take up the sword as captains in Mulhorand's campaign—promises Abasi-Retep is not authorized to make.

THE PEOPLE

While the various churches and governments vie for control of Unther, the people struggle to eke out an existence. Some reject both Mulhorand and Untheri godservants entirely, preferring to determine their own path.

The Enclave

A small group of secretive wizards based in the Greenfields of southern Unther, the Enclave once maintained a position of neutral opposition to Gilgeam's rule and now toward the Mulhorandi invaders. They hold no interest in who rules Unther, only that there continues to be an Unther to rule. Recently, the Enclave has been faced with the hard realization that the Unther it knew is swiftly disappearing. The Enclave's leader, Isimud (LG male Mulan human wizard 19/archmage 5), believes Ningal and her Rebels of the Moon's open dedication to Selûne is too much in line with the folly of other would-be powers in Unther, and thus the Enclave's considerable power goes largely unspent. Rumored locations for their headquarters are marked on the map, some of which now lie abandoned or have been repurposed as Mulhorandi traps for rebels.

Rebels of the Moon

The pious, charismatic "daughter of the moon," Ningal (NG female air genasi bard 4/fighter 4/sorcerer 8), leads a growing band of rebels dedicated to Selûne, who fight for an Unther free of both Gilgeam's legacy and Mulhorand's pharaoh. She has refused assistance from the Northern Wizards, the Red Wizards of Thay, and the church of Tiamat, leading some of her captains to believe that she might sabotage her own rebellion for fear of some external power corrupting her vision for Unther.

Gray Ghosts

Based in a small makeshift city in the southern foothills of the Uthangol Mountains, this bandit tribe is some two thousand strong. Once a powerful force that effectively ruled the trade routes from Hardcastle eastward, the Gray Ghosts are now a waning power hoping to retain what influence they have and eke out a better living than that which they have scraped together in recent years. They are led by their aging half-elf chief, Furifax (LE male moon half-elf fighter 15). The Gray Ghosts attack caravans travelling Mulhorandi supply lines. A cruel, brutal warcaptain, Furifax shows mercy to adventurers and other able warriors—leaving them food and a single weapon, but claiming all magical treasure—but enslaves any merchants he encounters.

EBERRON

DRAGONMARKS

FRAGMENTS OF THE PROPHECY

by Russell Brown • introduction by Keith Baker • illustrated by John Gravato

The future isn't just set in stone. It's carved in wood, traced in the course of rivers, and written on the wind. When I was a boy, a dragon told me that the mark on my arm was an emblem of the Prophecy, and that every move I made altered the course of the future. Believe what you will, but open your eyes and you will find the signs of the Prophecy in the most unexpected place.

—Tasker, Excoriate of House Sivis

The secrets revealed in the Draconic Prophecy drove the progenitor wyrms, Eberron, Khyber, and Siberys, to split the world at the dawn of time. Esoteric fragments of its revelations inspired another generation of draconic creatures to reclaim Eberron from fiendish overlords. The fragments of the Prophecy, scattered throughout the world, constantly fascinate the dragons of Argonnessen and small groups of erudite scholars among the lesser races.

Although it appears that only dragons have the capability to fully comprehend the Prophecy, individual fragments convey guidelines to possible futures or manifest other magical powers. Every fragment is of great value and attracts the attention of dragons, who ever seek to glean hidden meanings within the Prophecy, or members of the Mosaic Committee of Aundair, who wrongly believe the Prophecy heralds an apocalypse and its fragments should be destroyed.

Interpreting the general meaning of marks tied to the Prophecy requires the ability to read Draconic and a successful DC 30 Knowledge (arcana) check. What a mark signifies is up to the DM, who can use it as a springboard to adventure.

THE ELDEEN SECTIONS

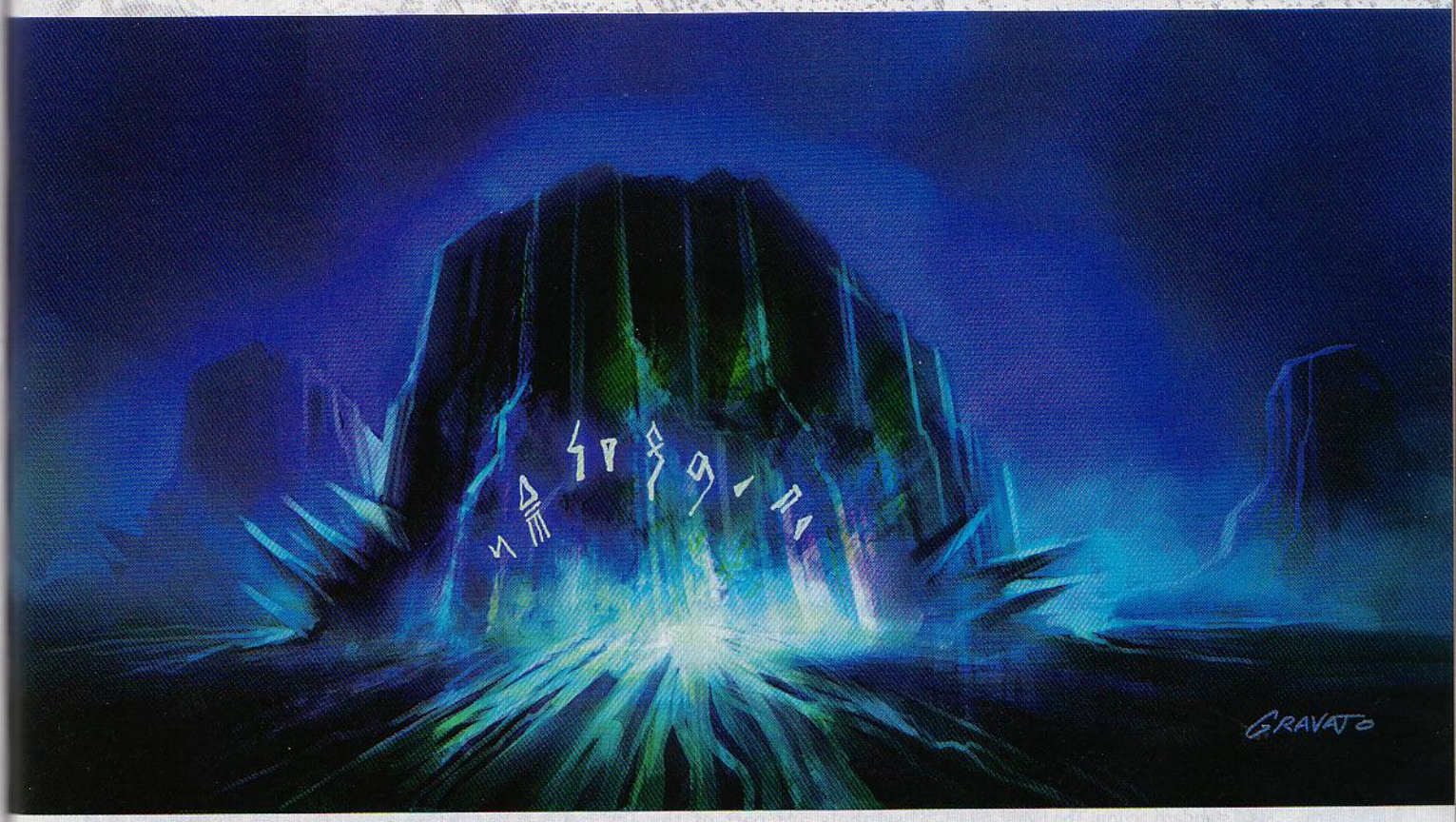
Lumber poachers cutting in the southern Eldeen Reaches were amazed to find one of the ancient darkwood trees they felled had growth rings in roughly the shape of a Lesser Mark of Warding. The poachers cut through the trunk two more times, creating two sections 4 feet across and about a foot thick. Using their usual darkwood smuggling route, they packed the Eldeen sections in large Aundair wine crates and sent them across Silver Lake on a barge. One of the crates—the one holding the prime section—was lost during the voyage, but the other was sold for a healthy sum to the Eldertanthers, a family of merchant gnomes in northern Breland.

The initial cut through the tree created two dragonmarks, one the inverse of the other. Both sections have hardness 5, 100 hp, and resistance to fire 10.

The prime section, which contains the symbol that most resembles the Lesser Mark of Warding, is always hidden from divination as if under the effects of a *nondetection* spell cast by a 6th-level sorcerer. It extends this protection to all creatures within 20 feet.

The section with the inverse mark provides spell resistance 19 to all creatures and objects within 20 feet. Such is the power of the magic within the inverse mark that it even forces a spell resistance check on existing spell effects.

The Eldertanthers have hidden the inverse section amid the ruins of Old Xandrar, hoping to make a deal with dragons, or perhaps with the dwarven



bankers of house Kundarak who bear the Mark of Warding. The Eldertanthers suspect the two sections together represent a crucial key to understanding a handful of other known pieces of the draconic Prophecy—one of their members believed in the theory so much that he used a House Sivis message station to dispatch messages revealing what he called the find of the century (as well as its location) to the *Korranberg Chronicle*. Since these declarations, the Eldertanthers have sought a new place to hide the inverse section. They have also sent agents with special diving equipment to search Silver Lake for the lost prime section.

The Wardens of the Wood, protectors of the Eldeen forests, also search for the Eldeen Sections—not just to recover them, but also to punish those who took them. Eldeen rangers under the direction of the Great Druid Oalian have already found the poachers who cut the tree and have taken them back to Sylbaran for punishment. Other rangers still follow the trail of the sections. Just like the Eldertanthers, Oalian believes the sections represent an important find.

THE MARKS OF THE OBSIDIAN FLOW

The journals of the half-orc explorer Samram d'Tharashk present a disturbing portrait of conditions in the southern Mournland less than a year after the Day of Mourning. After dispassionate descriptions of breaking through the border mists and crossing the carnage of the Field of Ruins, Samran describes, with apparent wonder, the Marks of the Obsidian Flow.

Against the southwestern slope of the Glass Plateau, Samran found what looked like waterfalls of dark black glass, frozen as they flowed down from the top of the plateau. One of these flows was guarded by a "cold mist" (Samran's first encounter with a living spell) and was alive with silver symbols that faded and reappeared in completely different forms. Samran mentions a separate scroll in which he recorded many of these symbols, but that document might no longer exist. Samran himself disappeared a year later on an expedition to the interior of Xen'drik.

Over the last few years, other explorers have sought the Marks of the Obsidian Flow. Even a dragon has searched, if rumors among the warforged are given credence. Although all have managed to locate the area of black glass, none have seen the symbols.

The Marks of the Obsidian Flow are a series of draconic characters that appear, a few at a time for a few seconds, before they fade and another set appears. The sequence manifests only when another fragment of the Prophecy is within 1,000 feet. The sequence changes depending on which fragment of the Prophecy is present, giving clues, in the ancient draconic language, to the whereabouts of other fragments of the Prophecy. Samram d'Tharashk's Least Mark of Finding triggered the flow, but later explorers possessed no such mark and found nothing.

LIVING FREEZING FOG **CR 12**

Eberron Campaign Setting 293, *Spell Compendium* 99

Always N Medium ooze

Init +1; **Senses** blind, blindsight 60 ft.; Spot +1, Listen +1

AC 17, touch 17, flat-footed 16

hp 102 (12 HD); **DR** 10/magic

Immune gaze attacks, visual effects, illusions, mind-affecting effects, poison, sleep effects, paralysis, polymorph, stunning, critical hits, flanking

SR 22

Fort +13 **Ref** +11 **Will** +11

Spd 40 ft.

Melee slam +12 (1d4+4 plus 1d6 cold)

Base Atk +9; **Grp** +12

Atk Options engulf

Abilities Str 16, Dex 13, Con 16, Int —, Wis 13, Cha 16

SQ slick ice

Engulf (Ex) A living freezing fog can flow around a Medium or smaller creature as a standard action. The living spell moves over the opponents, affecting as many as it can cover. Opponents can make attacks of opportunity against the living freezing fog, but if they do so they are not entitled to a saving throw. Those who do not attempt attacks of opportunity must succeed on a DC 19 Reflex save or be engulfed; on a success, they are pushed back or aside (opponents choice) as the living spell moves forward. Engulfed creatures take 1d6 points of cold damage each round on the living freezing fog's turn and are considered to be grappled.

Slick Ice (Ex) A living freezing fog coats any solid surface it passes over in a slick, icy rime. Any creature in this slick area must make a DC 10 Balance check in order to move, falling prone if it fails its save by 5 or more. Creatures in a slick area can't take a 5-foot step. An area remains slick for 3 rounds after the living freezing fog leaves it.

ANT RUNES

Eleven years ago, a series of earthquakes along the eastern coast of Seren opened a mile-long trench in the earth. Every few months, a small group of giant ants (*Monster Manual,* 284) climbs out of the trench and hunts large game. After they bring down an antelope, wild boar, or other prey, they drag its carcass to the edge of the trench, strip it clean, then arrange the bones in strange shapes and bury them, creating mounds that look like strange runic symbols.

Keloth'ko, the shaman of a nearby tribe of Seren, has convinced his people that the symbols are a message from the Evil Ones who rule in the east and haunt their dreams (the Quori). Every few days, Keloth'ko dispatches a few warriors to make sure the ants aren't colonizing the surface. The warriors also destroy any mound symbols, shoveling the dirt and bones over the edge of the ravine.

Keloth'ko doesn't realize the symbols are part of the Draconic Prophecy. If a dragon visits the trench looking for the symbols, or if someone convinces Keloth'ko that the symbols are part of the Prophecy, he is overcome by guilt and shame and demands his tribe take him to the trench and hurl him in as a sacrifice to the ants and the Seren's dragon masters. When shamans of nearby tribes hear about what Keloth'ko's people have done at the trench, they attack them and raid their village, believing that the dragons might favor them as they inflict this punishment.

LHESH FIREGEMS

Thirty years ago, as the hobgoblin warlord Haruuc gathered the scattered forces of goblinkind to conquer Darguun, a goblin named Gottyg traveled through the northern reaches of the domain. He discovered the dung of a giant firebeetle containing a strange, gemlike pellet that glowed faintly like fire. He took the firegem to Lyrenton (then a thriving human town) and sold it to a local artificer. Just minutes after Gottyg left, the man's workshop exploded with fire, killing the artificer. The flash of the fire dazed Gottyg, and he had a clear vision of a female goblin traveler at the base of a hill he had seen two days' walk to the north. He managed to track down the traveler in his vision and discovered that she too had uncovered a firegem.

Over the years, Gottyg and other goblin prospectors like him have uncovered dozens of firegems. More careful investigation revealed that any divination spell cast on or within range of a firegem, including *detect magic* or *identify,* triggers it. When triggered, a firegem ignites and flies 10 feet into the air, tracing strange symbols in fire for a few seconds before exploding in a *fireball* that deals 5d6 points of damage. All creatures within 60 feet of the *fireball* then gain the effect of *clairaudience/clairvoyance.* The information revealed by these divinations seems random, but sages now believe it always relates somehow to the Prophecy, even if to point out a previously undiscovered piece.

Since the discovery of firegems coincided with warlord Haruuc's rise to power, his supporters saw it as a sign and celebration of his success, naming them Lhesh firegems. Lhesh firegems are used as fireworks at goblin celebrations, as a divination tool, and for sale to Seren traders sailing the Dragonreach, who presumably offer them to their dragon gods. Bands of poor goblins scour northern Darguun and the southern Mournland for fire beetle droppings, digging through them with their hands and sometimes being badly burned or killed by the beetles in the process. No fire beetle in captivity has ever produced a firegem.

SULERRED CALLING TREE

The ancient walled monestery of Sulerred lies at the edge of the forest, 50 miles southeast of the busy port of Trolanport in Zilargo.

The monks of Sulerred stand out in the region because none of them are gnomes. At least, not any more. The secret of Sulerred Monastery, and the reason for its existence, is a banyan tree growing in its courtyard. Like any banyan, a lattice of thick roots descending from the lower branches augments its trunk—a remnant of the tree's early life when another, long-forgotten tree supported it. Unlike other banyans, the descending roots of the Sulerred Calling Tree reform each spring into new patterns and symbols. These patterns are officially recorded and celebrated every year on the Day of Calling, the 20th day of Eyre.

The monks study the strange twisted root symbols, but their reverence for the tree is fueled mainly by its power to reincarnate. During the week before the Day of Calling, local gnomes bring the remains of their recently deceased to the gates of Sulerred and hand them over to the monks. The locals camp outside the walls in a sort of mournful fairground, while the monks wash the bodies and lay them around the base of the Calling Tree. The monks begin a chant at dawn on the Day of Calling, while a few of them walk among the bodies, looking for signs of life and change. One of the dead reincarnates sometime between noon and sundown and is given food, a monk's robe, and a forehead tattoo representing the newly formed root symbol under which he returned to life.

The reincarnated gnome leaves the gates as a new race and searches for his family among the crowds waiting in anticipation outside. It isn't unusual for a mother or a daughter to recognize her revived loved one in his new form and run to him while others in the crowd face the realization that their family members are gone for good. The monks place the remaining bodies on a pyre outside the gate and burn them in a mass funeral at sundown the next day.

Although family members frequently try to convince the reincarnated to return home, most stay on at Sullerred as monks, wishing to tend and protect the tree that gave them new life.

FURTHER READING

The Draconic Prophecy is vast and knowledge pertaining to it is incomplete, at best. Those who seek out further pieces of the unsolvable puzzle that is the Prophecy would do well to explore the many resources presented to them.

You can find further information on the Draconic Prophecy in the following places: *Eberron Campaign Setting, Dragonmarked, Eyes of the Lich Queen, Magic of Eberron, Player's Guide to Eberron, Storm Dragon,* and on the web at **wizards.com/default.asp?x=dnd/ebds/20041227a.**

 by Andy Collins • illustrated by Andrew Hou

OFFICIAL ANSWERS TO YOUR QUESTIONS

This month, the Sage answers a variety of questions on topics random or obscure. Send your questions for the Sage to **askdnd@wizards.com**.

Can you take a 5-foot step in a surprise round? What about if you're *slowed*?

Yes and yes.

According to the *Player's Handbook*, "[y]ou can move 5 feet in any round when you don't perform any other kind of movement." The surprise round is still a round (even though you don't get to take your full complement of actions).

Although you can't take a 5-foot step if your movement is hampered by difficult terrain or darkness, other penalties to your movement don't prevent you from taking a 5-foot step unless the penalty reduces your speed to 5 feet or less (*Player's Handbook*, 144). Even a creature with a *slow* spell on it can still take 5-foot steps (as long as its adjusted speed is no less than 10 feet).

When a character casts a spell with a divine focus component, does he have to hold the divine focus (such as a cleric's holy symbol) or is it enough that he simply wears it?

The rules are largely silent as to how a caster physically manipulates his a spell component (whether material, focus, or divine focus). The "Cast a Spell" action described on page 140 of the *Player's Handbook* states that "preparing these materials is a free action" but doesn't say anything specific about having to hold them, wave them around, or anything else of the sort.

The Sage has always assumed that some amount of physical manipulation of components is required—pulling a pinch of sand from a belt pouch to cast *sleep*, for example—and that such manipulation is consumed as part of that free action. For a divine focus, the Sage could imagine a cleric or paladin briefly touching his holy symbol as part of that free action. Ultimately, however, the game doesn't demand that level of precision—as long as the components are at hand, that's all you really need.

If your initiative modifier changes during combat, does this change your place in the initiative cycle?

No.

Once your place in the initiative cycle is set, simply altering your initiative check modifier doesn't have any effect on when you act.

Does a creature provoke an attack of opportunity when falling through a threatened square?

Technically, any time you leave a threatened square, you provoke attacks of opportunity (unless using a special action to avoid them, such as the withdraw action or the 5-foot adjustment). Nothing in the rules suggests that the speed of the moving character has any impact on this, so the Sage must conclude that even if your movement is due to a fall, you should provoke opportunity attacks if you leave a threatened square.

Does a caster know why his spell fails? Can he tell the difference between a successful save, a failed check to overcome spell resistance, or immunity to the effect?

The rules don't really state how to communicate why a spell or other effect failed to affect (or fully affect) its target. The Sage recommends the DM provide as much information as possible, using the following guidelines:

1) Can the character observe it? When a steel weapon hits a stone golem, or when a *fireball* hits a barbed devil, it should be pretty obvious that some (or all) of the damage is negated.

2) Does it promote interesting decisions by the player? Even a little bit of information can dramatically assist a player to make interesting tactical decisions during a fight. If you never tell the ranger that the wounds his steel weapon inflicts upon the werewolf instantly heal up, he won't ever learn to use a different weapon in such fights.

3) Does it make your job easier? As the DM, it's easy to become an "information hoarder" by keeping players in the dark as to what exactly is happening to the monsters they're fighting. In many cases, however, it's easier to let the players in on at least some of the secrets. Go ahead and tell the player that the manticore made its save against his *sound burst* spell (so he doesn't have to waste his time reciting the part of the effect the creature can ignore), or that the glabrezu ignored 10 points of the sorcerer's *cone of cold* spell (so he can apply that resistance the next time he tells you the damage).

All that said, there's nothing wrong with keeping a little mystery in the game. If you don't want your players learning that the shapechanged dragon interacting with them is immune to *hold person* because he's not a humanoid, feel free to be vague on exactly what happened. (Of course, if you've been entirely forthcoming with information before now, this alone might elicit suspicion.)

If a character has a readied action to cast a spell when another character casts a spell, whose spell goes first? What if one is quickened and the other is not?

A readied action always interrupts the action that triggers it. The casting time or activation time of either action doesn't have any effect on the timing of a readied action—a readied *magic missile* spell (standard action casting time) still interrupts a quickened spell. It even interrupts an immediate action, such as a *feather fall* spell.

Can a character perform both a swift action and a free action in the same round?

Yes.

Performing a swift or immediate action has no effect on your ability to perform other actions during that turn (other than additional swift or immediate actions).

You can only perform one swift action per turn. Performing an immediate action counts as using your swift action (if you perform it during your turn) or as your next turn's swift action (if you use it when it isn't your turn).

Is it possible for a character to multiclass with two variations of the same class, such as a multiclass telepath/egoist?

No.

All variations of a given class are considered the same class for the purpose of multiclassing.

If I have two amounts of the same kind of damage reduction or energy resistance from different sources, do they stack?

No. Use only the higher DR or energy resistance value (unless one of the effects specifically states otherwise).

For example, a 13th-level barbarian wearing an adamantine breastplate would have DR 2/— from the armor and DR 3/— from his class levels, so he'd use the DR value from his class.

Similarly, an aasimar (resist cold 10) wearing a *greater ring of cold resistance* (resist cold 30) would use the resistance value from the ring.

The *phantom threat* spell (*Spell Compendium*, 157) and the distracting attack ranger alternative class feature (*Player's Handbook II*, 55) both say the target is treated as flanked. Does this also apply to ranged attacks made against the target?

No.

Ranged attacks gain no bonus when used against a flanked creature.

Can a character using an effect that grants its benefits to his "allies" specifically designate who his "allies" are, or does it automatically include everyone in the party? Once the effect is created, can I change who my "allies" are and change who's affected?

Yes and no.

Each time you cast a spell or other effect that affects your allies (such as *bless*), you're completely free to designate which creatures are affected.

You could exclude a character who considers himself an ally to you (if you're feeling mean), and you could even include a creature who considers itself an enemy to you.

That said, you can't change your decision after you've cast the spell. For example, you can't retroactively remove the fighter from the effect of a *bless* spell after he's been dominated by the enemy sorcerer.

***Dragon Magic* states that whenever a dragon shaman (*Player's Handbook II*, 11) selects a feat or option whose effect depends on a character's draconic heritage, one should "treat his totem as his heritage selection." What does this mean?**

It means that a dragon shaman can't ever choose a heritage feat (or other option that requires a particular draconic heritage) that doesn't match his totem. A dragon shaman who has chosen black dragon as his totem can't ever choose Bronze Dragon Lineage, for example.

Of course, the character must still qualify for the draconic feats as normal. Just being a dragon shaman doesn't exempt you from the listed prerequisites for the feats in question.

If a character gains a breath weapon from two different sources (for instance, if he's a half-dragon dragon shaman), do the breath weapons stack?

No.

Each breath weapon functions separately, using its own damage, area, save DC, recharge time, and other game mechanics.

A familiar has Hit Dice equal to its base creature or its master, which means it gains Hit Dice as its master gains levels. Does the familiar gain feats and ability score increases as its master levels? If so, when?

A familiar's Hit Dice don't actually change, so it doesn't gain feats, ability score increases, or any other side effects of gaining HD.

The "Hit Dice" entry in the *Player's Handbook* sidebar on familiars only applies to effects that refer to the target's Hit Dice or level as part of the effect.

For example, the *sleep* spell only affects creatures of 4 Hit Dice or less. Thus, the bat familiar of a sorcerer or wizard of 5th level or higher would be immune to this spell, even though the creature itself has a mere 1/4 HD.

Does the uncanny blow weapon stunt of the exotic weapon master (*Complete Warrior*, 30) allow you to count a one-handed exotic weapon as two-handed, for purposes of the Power Attack feat, when wielded in one hand?

No.

The prestige class ability clearly states that it applies only when "wielding a one-handed exotic weapon in two hands."

At 5th level, the invisible blade (*Complete Warrior*, 44) gains the uncanny feint class feature, which lets him feint as a free action. If he makes a successful Bluff attempt can he make sneak attacks on all his attacks that round?

Not exactly.

The feint action only benefits "the next melee attack you make" (*Player's Handbook*, 155), so a single successful feint wouldn't ever grant you the ability to make more than one sneak attack.

Note that the *Complete Warrior* errata published on the Wizards of the Coast website (**wizards.com/default.asp?x=dnd/er/20040125a**) indicates that the invisible blade may only use this class feature once per round, even though it's a free action.

Dragon

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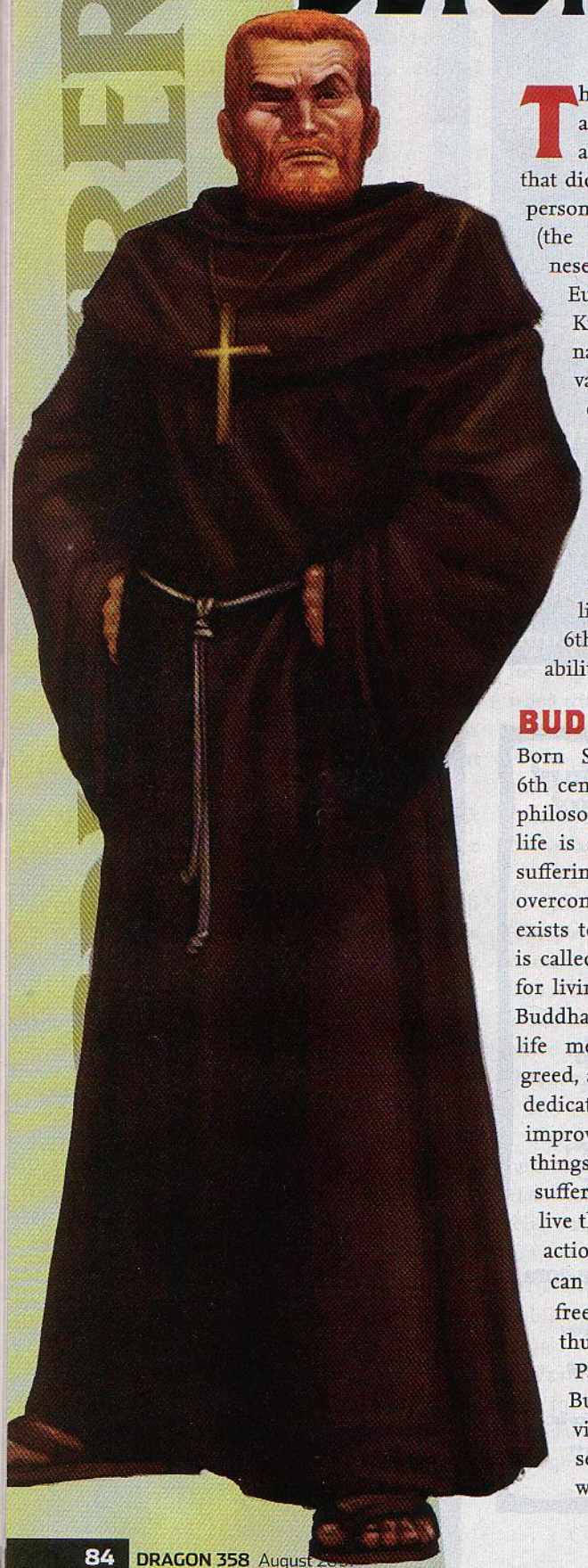
by Jonathan Vespa • illustrated by Tyler Walpole

BEYOND KUNG-FU



This article presents four variant monk styles. Each follows a historical example of monks that did not embody the martial arts persona. They include two from Asia (the Indian Buddhist and Japanese Shinto monk) and two from Europe (the Franciscan Friar and Knight Hospitaller). These alternative progressions follow the variant fighting styles presented on page 52 of *Unearthed Arcana*. A monk who follows one of these alternative progressions gains a +2 bonus on the listed skill. At 6th-level, he can gain an additional ability if he meets the prerequisites listed (he must meet them at 6th level or else he sacrifices this ability).

BUDDHIST MONK

Born Siddhartha Guatama in the 6th century BCE, Buddha founded a philosophy on Four Noble Truths: all life is suffering, attachment causes suffering, you can end suffering by overcoming attachment, and a path exists to accomplish this. This path is called the Eightfold Path, a guide for living a virtuous and noble life. Buddha believed that this virtuous life meant a rejection of anger, greed, and jealously, and a constant dedication to good will and self-improvement. But believing these things is not enough to end suffering. Buddha taught you must live the Eightfold Path in thought, action, and desire. In doing so, you can achieve a state of perfection free from desire and suffering—thus becoming enlightened.

Part teacher and part ascetic, a Buddhist monk wanders from villages to serene mountaintops searching for the path of wisdom. Even after attaining enlightenment, some monks still adventure. Known as *bodhisattvas* in the Buddhist tradition, they attained enlightenment but refused Nirvana so as to teach others how to seek the way. Such teachers are greatly revered.

A Buddhist monk adventures to seek knowledge and attain enlightenment. In addition, he adventures to teach others about the path of enlightenment and the inevitable suffering that desire causes. Because the Buddhist monk uses an exalted feat (marked with an asterisk and discussed in the sidebar), a monk must be lawful good to take this fighting style.

1st-Level Skill Bonus: Sense Motive
1st-Level Feat: Iron Will
2nd-Level Feat: Combat Expertise
6th-Level Feat: Intuitive Attack*
6th-Level Bonus Ability: Your quest for enlightenment has focused your intuition. The bonus granted by your still mind ability increases to +5. *Prerequisites:* Concentration 5 ranks, Sense Motive 9 ranks.

FRANCISCAN FRIAR

Founded in 1209 by St. Francis of Assisi, the Franciscans (also known as Grey Friars) practiced charity and led lives as mendicants—that is, they practiced begging as a lifestyle.

Friars maintained an ascetic life organized around vows of poverty, humility, and chastity. The Church expected them to forgo material possessions, live in faith and obedience, and eschew the roles of husbands and fathers in exchange for serving God. Friars differed from monks in the application of their vows to their faith. Whereas monks maintained an ascetic life in monastic seclusion, friars kept no permanent abode. Rather, they begged for a living and performed charity in all acts while traveling the countryside. Peasants recognized the

Franciscan Friars as teachers and healers. Living alongside the poor earned them firsthand knowledge of the hardships of poverty, which in turn earned them respect among both peasant and noble alike.

Franciscan friars emphasize humility and charity as wandering teachers. They adventure to help the poor and bring relief to those who suffer. Because the Franciscan friar uses an exalted feat (marked with an asterisk and discussed in the sidebar), a monk must be lawful good to take this fighting style.

1st-Level Skill Bonus: Heal

1st-Level Feat: Self-Sufficient

2nd-Level Feat: Vow of Chastity*

6th-Level Feat: Diehard

6th-Level Bonus Ability: Your work with the poor and the suffering has taught you many secrets of healing. You gain the ability to cast *cure light wounds, purify food and drink,* and *remove disease* once each per day as a spell-like ability (caster level equals half your monk level). *Prerequisites:* Heal 4 ranks, Survival 4 ranks.

KNIGHT HOSPITALLER

The Knights of the Hospital of St. Joseph of Jerusalem, also called the Knights Hospitaller, played a central role in the Christian crusades of the Middle Ages. Founded in the 12th century, the Knights Hospitaller are more commonly associated with the martial image of their rival counterparts, the Knights Templar. Both featured strongly in the Christian campaigns to reclaim Jerusalem and the Holy Land, known in Europe as Outremer: the land beyond the sea.

Originally, the Knights Hospitaller formed a monastic brotherhood dedicated to aiding and protecting pilgrims in the Holy Land. Pilgrims traveling from Europe could count on protection and shelter from the knights. Eventually, with the emergence of the Knights Templar, they morphed into a military organization during the centuries of crusades. Like the Knights Templar, they combined a monastic lifestyle with a knightly one, becoming Medieval Europe's first warrior-priests. Renowned for their courage and martial prowess, they came to lead large armies into battle and served as an elite fighting force in Outremer.

A Knight Hospitaller adventures to protect others or some sacred and honored site.

1st-Level Skill Bonus: Spot

1st-Level Feat: Weapon Focus (any)

2nd-Level Feat: Combat Expertise

6th-Level Feat: Weapon Specialization (as Weapon Focus)

6th-Level Bonus Ability: You are skilled at protecting others. If you use Combat Expertise, the bonus you gain also applies to one adjacent ally of your choice who is not using Combat Expertise. *Prerequisites:* Spot 9 ranks, Combat Reflexes.

SHINTO MONK

Shintoism is a Japanese religion dating from around the 4th century BCE. Its beliefs center on nature reverence and worshiping spirits, called *kami.* Historically, it is a spiritual religion without strong direction from doctrine or divine writings. Rather, Shintoism describes a universal natural force that pervades all living beings. Translated as "the Way from the Gods," it emphasizes the relationship between mortals and the *kami.* It is a way of thinking and acting that maintains the mortal connection to the natural world.

Shinto monks revere the natural world. They honor its deep beauty and natural order that sustains and protects all people. *Kami* connect mortals to this natural order, the spiritual realm that pervades all living things. Because it pervades all life, people must act to maintain its balance. Shintoism emphasizes purity of body and heart, rebirth and rejuvenation, and the order of the group over the desires of the individual. Shinto monks regard animals as messengers of the *kami* and recognize many natural places as sacred, like small forest glades or hidden mountain valleys. Water is often prominent in these scared places because of its symbolic connection to purity and rebirth.

A Shinto monk adventures to maintain the balance and nature of the *kami.* He hopes to discover sacred places of nature and to establish a shrine to honor them. Because the Shinto monk uses exalted feats (marked with an asterisk and discussed in the sidebar), a monk must be lawful good to take this fighting style.

1st-Level Skill Bonus: Knowledge (nature)

1st-Level Feat: Animal Affinity

2nd-Level Feat: Vow of Purity*

6th-Level Feat: Nymph's Kiss*

6th-Level Bonus Ability: Because of your great devotion to nature you gain an animal companion. Your effective druid level equals 1/3 your monk level. Levels in multiple classes that provide animal companions stack. *Prerequisites:* Handle Animal 4 ranks, Knowledge (nature) 4 ranks.

EXALTED FEATS

This article mentions several feats from *Book of Exalted Deeds* (for mature audiences only), which are summarized here.

Intuitive Attack (page 44): Use your Wisdom modifier instead of Strength modifier on attack rolls made with simple weapons or natural weapons.

Nymph's Kiss (page 44): Against fey, you gain a +2 circumstance bonus on Charisma-related checks and a +1 bonus on saves against spells and spell-like abilities. Starting with the level in which you take this feat, you gain +1 skill point per level.

Vow of Chastity (page 47): Abstain from sexual contact to gain a +4 perfection bonus on Will saves made against charm and phantasm spells and effects.

Vow of Purity (page 48): Avoid touching dead creatures (even for food) to gain a +4 perfection bonus on Fortitude saves made against diseases and death effects.

by Jonathan Drain, Tim Hitchcock, John E. Ling, Jr., Hal Maclean, and Troy E. Taylor • illustrated by Tyler Walpole

ARCANE

ARCANE FEATS

Arcane spellcasters seldom remain beholden to stereotypes about themselves, nor do they copy one another in form, style, or strategy. It is no wonder, then, that they continually strive to create new and mind-breaking abilities based off their magical aptitude. Occasionally, a master might quantify his findings in feats. Some of these feats build off systems, classes, or ideas presented in *Complete Arcane* or *Complete Mage*, and several of them can be gained as wizard bonus feats (*Player's Handbook*, 57).

ARCANE FOCUS ITEM

You can craft a unique signature staff or other item that serves as a focus for your magic.

Prerequisites: Craft Wondrous Item, any metamagic feat, arcane caster level 3rd.

Benefit: You create a personal arcane device that you carry with you, typically a staff but optionally another item like a pocket watch or amulet. This device serves as a focus for magical energy, improving your ability to apply metamagic effects to spells. You must hold the item in your hand in order to gain its benefits.

If you spontaneously cast spells (as a sorcerer does), three times per day the focus allows you to apply a metamagic feat to a spell without increasing its casting time.

If you prepare spells (as a wizard does), three times per day you may spontaneously convert any spell into a metamagic-enhanced version of any lower-level spell you currently have prepared. Converting a spell in this way forces you to lose the higher level spell, which must be of the appropriate spell level for the spell you cast and the metamagic feat you use. You must have the metamagic feat you wish to use in this way. For example, you may spontaneously lose a prepared *fireball* spell in order to cast an empowered *magic missile*, but only if you have both a normal *fireball* and a normal *magic missile* spell prepared.

In addition, you may treat the item as an arcane focus in place of any spell components worth 1 gp or less, and a hand in which you hold the device is considered your free hand for the purpose of casting somatic components.

You may also use magic item creation feats such as Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Craft Staff, and Craft Wondrous Item to enhance the device as an item of its type. If you lose your arcane device or it is not on you, all your spells suffer a –1 penalty to caster level until you recover it or create a new one. If you have your device on you but aren't wearing or wielding it actively, you suffer no ill effects but neither do you gain any benefits.

Creating an arcane device costs 100 gp and takes 24 hours.

A wizard may take Arcane Focus Item as a wizard bonus feat.

ARCANE SHORTHAND

You discovered a shorthand method for recording spells in spellbooks.

Benefit: You scribe spells in a spellbook using a shorthand that lets you transcribe faster and to occupy less space than normal. This shorthand cuts in half the time required to write a spell in a spellbook. Such spells also take up half as many pages and require half as much of the special materials normally used.

The Spellcraft DC to learn or prepare a spell from a borrowed spellbook written in shorthand equals 25 + spell level.

Special: A spellbook written with this method holds more spells and is

thus worth more than a normal spellbook of the same number of pages.

A wizard may take Arcane Shorthand as a wizard bonus feat.

Normal: The Spellcraft DC to learn or prepare a spell from a borrowed spellbook equals 15 + spell level.

BOOK SMART

You've read books on a variety of subjects, and have a knack for cross-referencing the information quickly in your mind.

Prerequisites: Int 15, Knowledge (any three) 6 ranks, ability to cast at least three arcane divination spells.

Benefit: You may make untrained Knowledge checks for DCs higher than 10.

Normal: Untrained Knowledge checks are limited to those with a DC of 10 or less.

ELDRITCH CLAWS

You can deliver your eldritch blast as a melee attack.

Prerequisite: Eldritch blast 2d6.

Benefit: As a free action, you can form the energy of your eldritch blast into a set of claws extending almost an entire foot from your hands. While your eldritch claws exist you may make up to two claw attacks as natural weapons. You are automatically proficient with your eldritch claws. On a successful attack with an eldritch claw, you deal your normal amount of unarmed strike damage plus your eldritch blast damage.

Once you form your eldritch claws they remain until just before the beginning of your next turn. You cannot use your normal eldritch blast ability while your eldritch claws exist.

A monk may not use eldritch claws as part of her flurry of blows.

FORCEFUL SPELL [METAMAGIC]

Your spells slam their targets with irresistible force.

Benefit: Only spells that target one or more creatures can be made forceful. An opponent struck by a forceful spell must make a Fortitude save at the same DC as the spell or be knocked prone and stunned for 1 round. If the spell affects more than one target, the forceful effect affects only one target (of your choice).

A forceful spell uses up a spell slot one level higher than the spell's actual level.

GRAPPLING BLAST

While grappling a foe, you can discharge your eldritch blast.

Prerequisites: Improved Grapple, eldritch blast 3d6.

Benefit: Whenever you make a successful grapple check to deal damage, you may also discharge your eldritch blast against the foe you're grappling. You also gain a circumstance bonus on your next grapple check made within the next round equal to half the damage you deal with your eldritch blast. You may not add any blast shape invocations to your eldritch blast when using it in this manner.

SLIMY SPELL [METAMAGIC]

Your spells douse opponents with a nauseating slime.

Benefit: Only spells that target one or more creatures can be made slimy. An opponent struck by a slimy spell must make a Reflex save at the same DC as the spell or be covered in a temporary layer of slime that renders the target nauseated for 1 round. If the spell affects more than one target, the slimy effect affects only one target (of your choice).

A slimy spell uses up a spell slot one level higher than the spell's actual level.

WEDDED TO THE LIGHT

Your connection to the Positive Energy Plane and the forces of life itself allow you to turn your familiar into a living vessel of light and energy.

Prerequisite: Good alignment, ability to summon a familiar.

Benefit: As you advance in levels you gain a number of additional abilities when interacting with your familiar. These abilities are in addition to those normally granted to or by your familiar.

At 1st level, you can, at will, order your familiar to glow as a free action, producing light equal to a torch.

Beginning at 5th level, you can, once per day, touch your familiar and channel a surge of positive energy that heals it for 1d6 points of damage + 1 per class level. This requires a move action.

At 9th level, you can, once per day, convert your familiar into pure positive energy for 1 minute. During that time, your familiar emits positive energy in a 20-foot-radius emanation. Undead within the emanation take 1 point of damage per round, while living creatures other than you or your familiar gain fast healing 1 while within this aura. After producing this emanation for 1 minute, your familiar disappears into the Positive Energy Plane for 24 hours, during which time you gain no benefits of having a familiar. Activating this ability is a standard action.

Beginning at 13th level, your familiar's loyalty and devotion, when coupled with its connection to the Positive Energy Plane, allows it to sacrifice itself to save your life. If able to reach your body within 1 round of your death, your familiar can unleash a conflagration of positive energy that consumes it utterly but returns you to life, stable but at –1 hit points. You suffer none of the ill effects that normally come from returning to life (including level loss), but you automatically lose the full 200 XP per class level for the death of your familiar. Due to the special nature of its sacrifice you can summon a new familiar after waiting only one month.

At 17th level, you and your familiar gain fast healing 1 as long as you both have at least 1 hit point and are within 5 feet of one another.

Special: Whenever you cast a spell with the darkness, death, or evil descriptor you lose access to all benefits of this feat for the next 24 hours.

A wizard may take Wedded To The Light as a wizard bonus feat.

by David Schwartz • illustrated by Tyler Walpole

AZTEC MYTHOS IV

When it came time to choose the fifth sun, the deities built a bonfire and stood around it discussing who would be next. None of the deities wanted to be the new sun, so they chose Nanahuatl, god of misfortune. Nanahuatl balked, but the other deities told him, "Don't be afraid. No longer will you be poor and weak; as the sun you will fly through the sky."

Thus, Nanahuatl closed his eyes and jumped into the bonfire. When his body had completely burned, he traveled underground until he reached the eastern horizon.

When the sun appeared over the horizon it was large and bright, but as soon as it appeared, it stopped. The gods sent a falcon to see what the trouble was. When the falcon returned, it told the assembled deities that the sun refused to rise unless they agreed to sacrifice themselves and give their hearts to the new sun.

Angry and frightened, the deities called upon the terrible war god Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli, the Morningstar. Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli took his bow and fired an arrow at Nanahuatl, but the new sun dodged out of the way. Then Nanahuatl took up his own bow and shot the Morningstar with a flaming dart. Wounded, Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli fell into the Dead Lands.

The deities realized that the sun was too powerful to resist, and so allowed themselves to be sacrificed one by one. Satisfied at last, Nanahuatl—now called Tonatiuh—began his journey across the sky.

Sacrifice is a fundamental component of the Central American Highland religion. While powerful, the deities are not omnipotent. It took effort to create the world, and it continues to take effort to keep it running smoothly. In exchange for sunlight, rain, and all the other gifts of the deities, humans must feed them. Without the sustenance provided by sacrifice, the deities become weak and senile, causing the universe to grind to a halt.

The Aztecs practiced animal sacrifice daily, with animals raised for just this purpose. Birds, such as quails and hummingbirds, were the most common. Dogs, already raised to feed humans, were also sacrificed to the deities. In other ceremonies, priests ritually destroyed pottery objects instead.

Offerings of human blood were made as well. Penitents pricked their flesh with maguey thorns and placed the bloody spikes in a woven receptacle as offering to the deities. Nearly everyone—old and young, commoner and noble—was required at one time or another to perform this ritual. Priests especially performed self-laceration as part of their ascetic lifestyle.

Of course, the Aztecs are best known for human sacrifice. While all of the tribes of Central America practiced this ritual at times, the Aztecs took human sacrifice to new levels of depravity. Where other city-states offered captives merely to appease the deities, in Tenochtitlan they used sacrifice as a political tool. The Aztecs forced subjugated city-states to provide them with victims and

staged mass sacrifices to display their might and empower their patron god, Huitzilopochtli. (Rules for sacrifice as a magical catalyst can be found in the *Book of Vile Darkness*, intended for mature audiences.)

TONATIUH

Intermediate God (Neutral Evil)

The fifth and current sun, Tonatiuh is a demanding god. He requires the blood of warriors to give him strength to fight his way through the underworld and defeat the forces of night. The people acquiesce, knowing they cannot live without the sun. His lesser aspect is Nanahuatl, the god of misfortune, such as poverty, disease, and earthquakes.

Tonatiuh is depicted with his face blazing like the sun; the light obscures the rest of his body. His previous incarnation, as Nanahuatl, appears as a wretched dwarf.

The doctrine of Tonatiuh teaches that happiness and success come only with toil and suffering. His followers are encouraged to test their own limitations. As Tonatiuh's own origins demonstrate, power does not come without pain.

Portfolio: Sun, misfortune.

Domains: Destruction, Evil, Sun, War.

Favored Weapon: Shortbow.

Cleric Training: Tonatiuh demands his clerics perform many exacting rituals to appease and strengthen the sun god on his daily journey. Followers fear that if the proper rituals are not performed, the sun will fail to rise and the time of monsters will ensue.

Just as Tonatiuh opposes creatures of the dark as he passes through the underworld, so too must his clerics.

Clerics of Tonatiuh channel positive energy regardless of their alignment.

Quests: Typical quests for Tonatiuh include finding or creating a magic item needed to win a battle, capturing a certain renowned warrior to sacrifice to the sun god, and defeating a powerful creature from the Underdark.

Prayers: As the sun sets, the people give prayers to Tonatiuh to strengthen him so he can rise again the next day. They also pray for mercy from Tonatiuh when the sun becomes oppressive or misfortunes strike.

Temples: Temples to Tonatiuh are built atop ziggurats, typically alongside temples to Tlaloc, the rain god. The altars of these temples are stained black from many offerings of blood.

Rites: The hearts of captured warriors are sacrificed to Tonatiuh on most days, to give him the strength to make his daily journey. As well, soldiers pierce themselves and scatter their blood as sacrifice to give power to the sun god. They hope that, in return, Tonatiuh grants them strength versus their enemies.

In Tenochtitlan, the Aztec war god Huitzilopochtli—a being even more bloodthirsty than Tonatiuh—subsumed the role of defeating night.

Herald and Allies: Tonatiuh's herald is a pit fiend. Allies are flamebrother, average, and noble salamanders (called *xiuhcoatl*, or "fire serpents").

XIPETOTEC

Intermediate God (Lawful Neutral)

Xipetotec, the Flayed Lord, is the god of agriculture and sacrifice. He allows others to flay off his red and diseased skin to reveal a golden body underneath. This is a metaphor for the process of growth in plants, the stalk emerging from the seed and the maize shucked from its husk, and spiritual growth—only by casting off one's sins and flaws can a person hope to reach perfection.

Xipetotec encourages his followers to seek self-perfection. By identifying your flaws and working to overcome them you become a better person. His followers also seek to improve society through commitment to the greater good, and by reforming (or removing) those who shirk their duty to the deities and their fellow man.

Portfolio: Agriculture, sacrifice.

Domains: Earth, Law, Luck, Plant.

Favored Weapon: Flail.

Cleric Training: The primary duty of clerics of Xipetotec is to oversee crops from planting to harvesting. They also aid others in making proper sacrifices to the deities.

Quests: Typical quests include protecting a harvest from swarming vermin, capturing a group of crop-stealing bandits, and destroying a useful artifact as a sacrifice to the deities.

Prayers: As god of agriculture, Xipetotec is predominantly worshiped by farmers, who pray for good crops. Those who suffer from a disease or curse might also call upon the Flayed Lord to remove their burden.

Temples: Temples of Xipetotec are decorated with motifs of corn and other crops. They are often built near communal silos.

Rites: Clerics of Xipetotec perform a number of agricultural rituals throughout the year. Among the Aztecs, these rituals are particularly grisly, as a priest imitates the god by wearing the flayed skin of a sacrificial victim.

Herald and Allies: The flayed-skinned herald of Xipetotec has the characteristics of a mummy lord, but is not evil. Allies are formian taskmasters, formian myrmarchs, and horned devils.

AZTEC MYTHOS I–IV

This concludes the Aztec Mythos series of Divine Class Acts. Quetzalcoatl the creator and Tezcatlipoca the destroyer are in #352, while #354 presented Tlaloc the rain god and Chalchihuitlicue the goddess of beauty appeared, and #356 detailed Cihuacoatl the earth goddess and Huitzilopochtli the Aztec patron. You can pick up these and other back issues at **paizo.com/backissues**.

Together, these four articles trace the five suns, or realities, of the Aztec cosmology. From shadowy Tezcatlipoca's too-dim sun to Quetzalcoatl's usurped role, Tlaloc's prematurely ended reign, the rain-flooded time of Chalchihuitlicue's, and finally, the current era under Tonatiuh.

by Mark A. Hart • illustrated by Tyler Walpole

PSIONIC

PSIONIC ALCHEMY

Over the years, alchemists have identified several unique substances and compounds that react to the presence of psionic energy. A handful of alchemists, learned in psionic lore, have perfected a variety of these compounds for production and sale.

Although these alchemical substances remain difficult to find and expensive to purchase, they have proven their value to adventurers. Because they usually interact with psionics instead of magic, these substances offer the greatest benefits to psionic creatures (those with at least 1 power point). Some of these items require or interact with psionic auras. A psionic aura is given off by any active or permanent power, or during the use of any psionic feat.

Adventurers and other buyers might locate psionic alchemy items in any large town or city. The psionic alchemy items described here represent some of the more common of those available.

AURA GEL

To activate this clear, viscous gel, you must first tear away the vial's thin lead covering and expose it to a psionic aura. When within 60 feet of active psionic powers or psi-like abilities, the gel emits a colorful glow, with the color based on the strongest aura within range (lesser auras are ignored). The glow increases or fades as it moves closer to or farther from a psionic aura, regardless of the strength of the strongest aura. After 1 minute of exposure to psionic energy, the gel turns to dust.

Aura gel reacts only to psionic energy; it does not react in the presence of magic.

Discipline	Color
Clairsentience	Yellow
Metacreativity	Gray
Psychokinesis	Red
Psychometabolism	Blue
Psychoportation	Black
Telepathy	White

CEREBRAL SERUM

Few concoctions boast as vile and acrid a taste as cerebral serum. The serum, black as tar and lumpy as oatmeal, helps inoculate the imbiber against psionic mental attacks and effects. If you drink the serum, you gain a +2 alchemical bonus on Will saves against mind-affecting psionic powers and psi-like abilities for 1 hour.

ECTOPLASMIC SKIN

A sealed flask of ectoplasmic skin contains a syrupy, silvery liquid. Once you remove the seal, the liquid begins to crystallize and evaporates within 1 minute. At any time before then, you may apply the liquid to your skin as a full-round action. The ectoplasm forms a translucent second skin over your body, providing you with damage reduction 2/magic for up to 1 minute. You cannot wear a psychic skin in conjunction with ectoplasmic skin.

INTUITION VAPOR

When you uncork this vial, a cloud of pale yellow vapors billows forth and fills the air with the scent of cinnamon. It contains enough vapors to fill four 5-foot squares. Only creatures with psionic powers or psi-like powers occupying the affected squares gain the vapor's benefits. Each affected creature

receives a +4 alchemical bonus on Concentration, Listen, and Search checks for the next 10 minutes.

As a side effect, the vapor slows the reactions of affected creatures for its duration. During that time, each affected creature takes a –2 penalty on Spot and initiative checks.

A psionic creature may make a DC 12 Fortitude save to resist the effects (both positive and negative) of the vapors.

LIQUID STONE

A flask of this substance holds a thick gray liquid with the consistency of watery mud. Even when exposed to air, liquid stone retains its wet consistency for up to 8 hours before turning to powder. When you expend your psionic focus while holding a flask of liquid stone, it slowly hardens into stone over 1 minute, during which time you may sculpt the mud however you choose. Once it dries, liquid stone retains the same properties as normal rock with a hardness of 8 and 15 hit points. It (or anything sealed by it) has a burst DC of 30. A flask of liquid stone covers an area 1-foot-square with 1 inch of stone.

MIMIC CLAY

This substance possesses a dull gray color and the consistency of natural clay. To activate mimic clay, you must touch it and expend your psionic focus. The clay takes on a translucent color and its consistency softens. When you visualize a hand-sized tool or object, the clay changes shape, texture, and color to duplicate the visualized item within 1 round. The clay retains the same mass and weight regardless of its transformation, so you must use an amount of clay equal to the weight of the object you wish to duplicate.

The clay has the potential to mimic any mundane object of Tiny or smaller size, although it cannot duplicate items with multiple parts or complex, moving pieces. If you wish to duplicate a precise item such as a key, you must make a DC 15 Craft check of the appropriate type (such as locksmithing).

A successful DC 20 Appraise check reveals an item created using mimic clay as a facsimile. The clay crumbles to dust 1 hour after activation.

PSI BLOCK

A small clay pot holds one application of psi block. The substance resembles a glossy, thin paste sticky to the touch. To use psi block, you must apply a thin, even coat of the paste over an object or creature. One pot contains enough psi block to coat a Medium creature or object.

Psi block acts like a thin sheet of lead. It prevents psionic powers and psi-like abilities such as *detect hostile intent* or *detect psionics* from noticing the creature or object. Psi block only blocks psionic detection powers and psi-like abilities. The paste hardens and flakes off the subject 1 hour after application. Before that time you may remove the paste with alcohol or a similar solvent. This requires 1 minute.

PSIONIC ICHOR

In its natural state, psionic ichor resembles green slime. In the presence of a psionic aura, the slime boils and bubbles, although it remains at room temperature. You can throw a flask of psionic ichor as a grenade-like weapon, although it only affects creatures with a direct hit. Treat this as a ranged touch attack with a range increment of 10 feet.

A direct hit with the ichor only affects creatures with psionic powers. A psionic creature doused by the substance must expend 1 additional power point for each psionic power he manifests.

The effect of psionic ichor lasts for 1 hour. A target may use a full-round action to wipe the ichor from his body. Multiple applications on the same target have no additional effect.

REJUVENATION ESSENCE

When consumed, this fine, bluish-white powder grants you exceptional rest. You rejuvenate power points after as little as 4 hours of rest instead of the usual 8 hours. In addition, you may ignore a single interruption during your rest cycle, thus avoiding adding another hour to your total sleep requirement.

XEPH'S BLOOD

This blood-colored liquid contains the essence of a xeph's speed burst. When you drink xeph's blood while holding psychic focus, you gain a momentary burst of speed. The mixture grants you an alchemical bonus of 10 feet to your base speed. The effect lasts for 3 rounds.

If you consume more than one dose of xeph's blood per day, you become fatigued with the second dose. If you consume a third dose in a day, you immediately become exhausted and gain no benefits from the xeph's blood.

PSIONIC ALCHEMICAL SUBSTANCES

Goods	Cost	Weight	Craft DC
Aura gel (flask)	25 gp	—	20
Cerebral serum (vial)	150 gp	—	30
Ectoplasmic skin (flask)	75 gp	1 lb.	25
Intuition vapor (vial)	75 gp	—	30
Liquid stone (flask)	25 gp	1 lb.	15
Mimic clay	30 gp	1 lb.	25
Psi block	25 gp	1 lb.	20
Psionic ichor (flask)	60 gp	1 lb.	30
Rejuvenation essence (vial)	30 gp	—	20
Xeph's blood (vial)	40 gp	—	30

by Amber E. Scott • illustrated by Tyler Walpole

PALADIN GUIDE

This guide employs charts, rules clarifications, suggestions, and rulebook references to enhance and ease the playability of the paladin.

LAY ON HANDS

A paladin can lay on hands as many times a day as she likes, so long as she does not exceed her daily healing allotment. For example, a paladin capable of healing 20 points of damage with her lay on hands ability can heal 20 points of damage once per day, 10 points of damage twice per day, 1 point of damage twenty times per day, or any combination that totals 20 points of damage.

A paladin bestows healing with a single touch, which requires only one free hand. She can deliver healing through a gauntlet or glove as well.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

A *cloak of Charisma* or other item or spell that grants a temporary Charisma bonus increases the paladin's saving throw bonus from her divine grace ability.

A paladin turning undead is treated as a cleric three levels lower than her paladin level for all turning related purposes. She may use her turn undead ability a number of times per day equal to 3 + her Charisma modifier.

A paladin can smite evil once per day plus one time per 5 paladin levels she attains. If she successfully smites an enemy, kills him, and then uses the Cleave feat to make an additional attack, she does not gain the smite bonus to this additional attack unless she spends another daily use of her smite ability.

Many of the paladin's special abilities are supernatural abilities and cease to function in an *antimagic field* but are not subject to spell resistance and cannot be dispelled. Some of her abilities are extraordinary, which means they are nonmagical and continue to function in an antimagic field. A paladin can also *detect evil* and *remove disease* as spell-like abilities. Spell-like abilities are magical and emulate spells, although they have no components of any type. Spell-like abilities don't function in an *antimagic field,* and they are subject to spell resistance (*detect evil* does not allow spell resistance; *remove disease* does, but is harmless). A paladin using a spell-like ability while threatened provokes an attack of opportunity but may make a Concentration check to use the ability on the defensive and avoid provoking attacks of opportunity.

CODE OF CONDUCT

A paladin must consistently adhere to a code of conduct. If she grossly violates this code, she loses all class abilities except for weapon, armor, and shield proficiencies and cannot take any more levels in paladin until she atones.

The basic code of conduct contains the following tenets:

Lawful Good Alignment: A paladin cannot willingly commit an evil act. A paladin might unwittingly commit an evil act, or do so under magical compulsion. In this instance, performing an *atonement* spell on the paladin incurs no XP cost to the caster. The paladin must attempt to rectify the situation and put right whatever harm her deeds caused.

Magical compulsion or ignorance do not offer a paladin carte blanche to commit evil acts she secretly thinks are justified and get away with it.

Respect Legitimate Authority: A paladin may not break the law simply because she feels the law is inappropriate or hinders her pursuit of justice. Individuals who pose as agents of the law while supporting the cause of evil—such as a corrupt lord who orders a paladin to undertake an illegal action—do not support the legitimate authority. A paladin is under no obligation to obey their commands, so long as she continues to serve the cause of good and takes steps to expose the corruption.

Act With Honor: A paladin may not lie, cheat, double-cross, or take advantage of anyone. She may not use poison, although she may make use of ravages (holy substances that deal damage only to evil creatures, see *Book of Exalted Deeds*, for mature audiences only). A paladin must uphold any promises she makes, to the best of her ability. Any violent acts the paladin undertakes must be motivated by good intentions and undertaken in such a way to minimize damage (a paladin may not slay every evil creature she sees in hopes of preventing future violence). She cannot levy violence against noncombatants, children, or helpless creatures, even evil ones.

Refuse to Associate with Evil Creatures: A paladin may only accept nonevil henchmen, followers, and cohorts. She may associate with an evil creature on a limited basis for purposes of redeeming that creature.

PALADIN FEATS AND PRESTIGE CLASSES

Paladins might find the following feats and prestige classes useful.

Feats: Extra Turning, Improved Turning (*Player's Handbook*); Celestial Mount, Exalted Smite, Exalted Turning, Favored of the Companions, Gift of Faith, Gift of Grace, Hands of a Healer, Holy Radiance, Holy Subdual, Knight of Stars, Nimbus of Light, Nymph's Kiss, Quell the Profane, Ranged Smite Evil, Sacred Vow, Spell Focus (good), Sanctify Martial Strike, Sanctify Weapon, Servant of the Heavens, Touch of Golden Ice, Vow of Abstinence, Vow of Chastity, Vow of Nonviolence, Vow of Obedience, Vow of Peace, Vow of Poverty, Vow of Purity (*Book of Exalted Deeds*); Ascetic Knight, Devoted Inquisitor, Devoted Performer, Devoted Tracker (*Complete Adventurer*); Augment Healing, Consecrate Spell, Disciple of the Sun, Divine Metamagic, Divine Spell Power, Glorious Weapons, Improved Smiting, Sacred Boost, Sacred Healing, Spontaneous Healer, True Believer (*Complete Divine*); Divine Cleansing, Divine Might, Divine Resistance, Divine Shield, Divine Vigor, Extra Smiting, Sacred Vengeance (*Complete Warrior*).

Prestige Classes: Anointed knight, defender of Sealtiel, emissary of Barachiel, fist of Raziel, risen martyr, sword of righteousness, vassal of Bahamut (*Book of Exalted Deeds*); shadowbane inquisitor (*Complete Adventurer*); consecrated harrier, divine crusader, hospitaler, pious templar, shining blade of Heironeous (*Complete Divine*); gray guard (*Complete Scoundrel*); cavalier, hunter of the dead, justiciar, kensai, knight of the Chalice, knight protector, Purple Dragon knight (*Complete Warrior*).

SPECIAL MOUNTS

Level	Mounts*
5th	Heavy warhorse, warpony
6th	Celestial heavy warhorse, celestial warpony, dire badger, dire bat, dire weasel, dire wolf, giant lizard, hippogriff, Large monstrous spider, Large shark, unicorn
7th	Dire boar, dire wolvering, giant eagle, giant owl, pegasus, rhinoceros, sea cat
8th	Dire lion, griffon

* Creatures listed aside from heavy warhorse and warpony are optional and only available with DM permission. See page 205 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

SUMMARY OF PALADIN ABILITIES

Lay on Hands Healing: Paladin level × Charisma bonus
Smite Evil Attack Modifier: Charisma bonus
Smite Evil Damage Modifier: +1 damage per paladin level
Turning Check: 1d20 + Charisma modifier
Turning Damage: 2d6 + (paladin level – 3) + Charisma modifier

TURN UNDEAD RESULTS

Turning Check Result	Most Powerful Undead Affected
0 or lower	Paladin's level – 7
1–3	Paladin's level – 6
4–6	Paladin's level – 5
7–9	Paladin's level – 4
10–12	Paladin's level – 3
13–15	Paladin's level – 2
16–18	Paladin's level – 1
19–21	Paladin's level
22 or higher	Paladin's level + 1

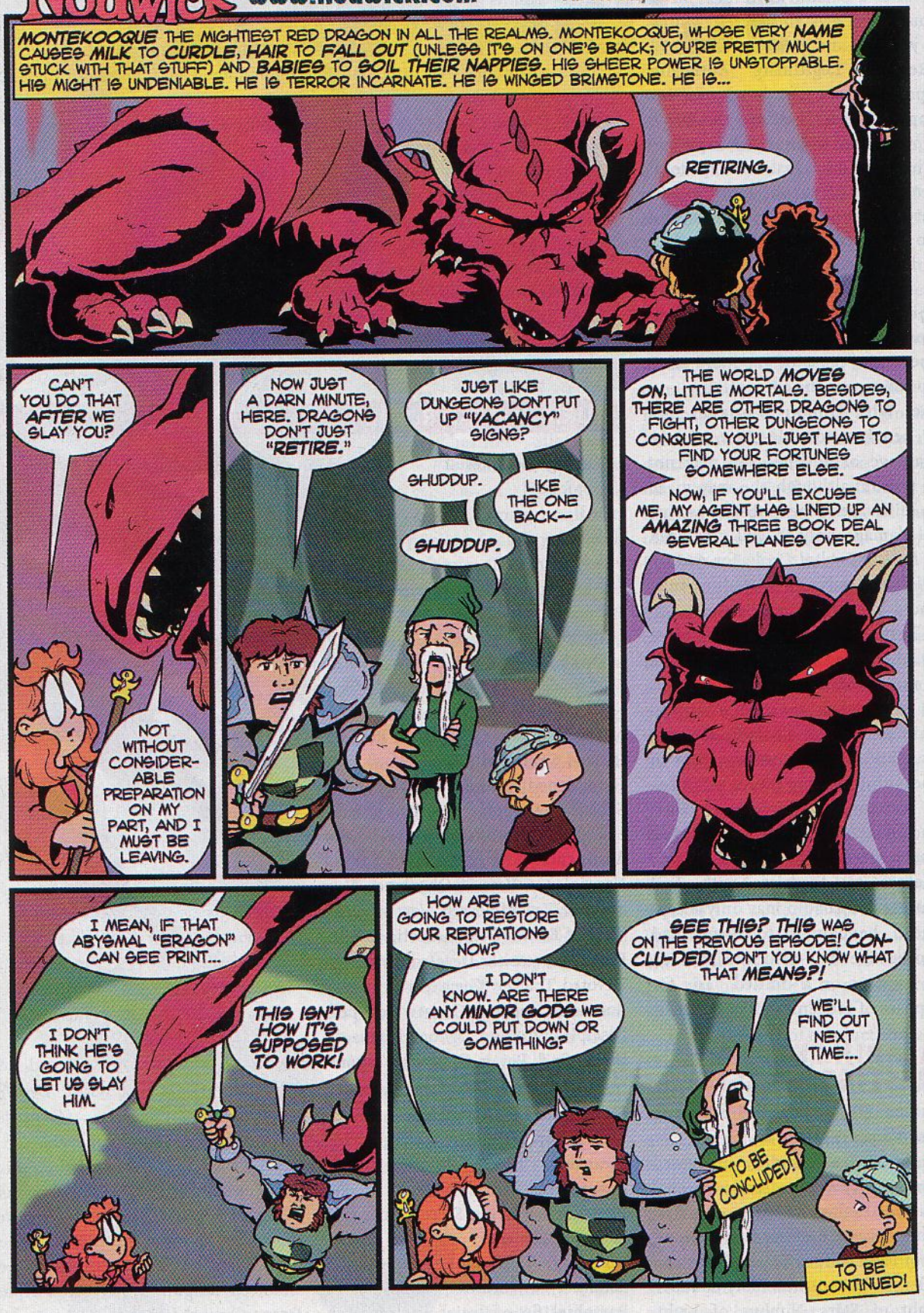
PALADIN ABILITIES

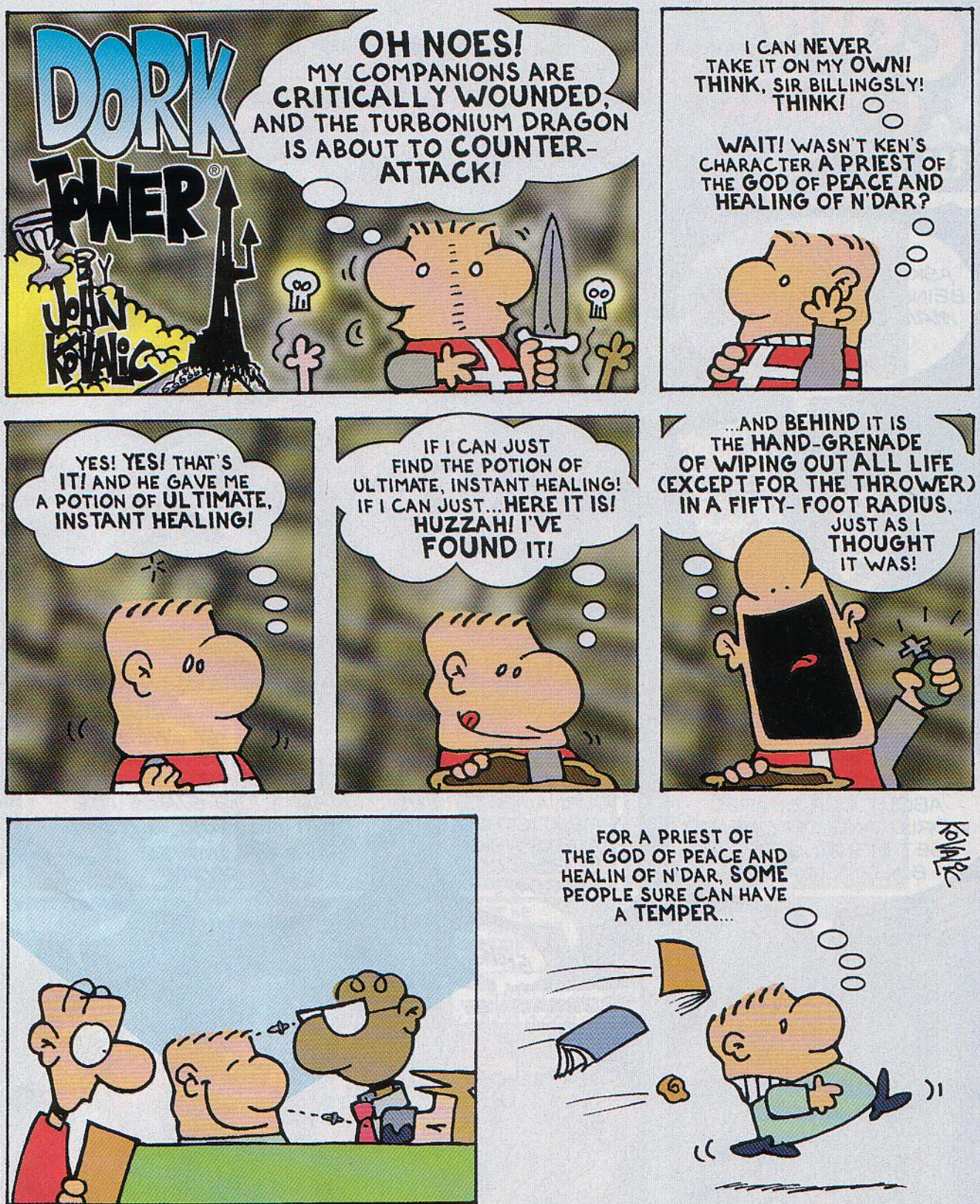
Ability	Type
Aura of Courage	Supernatural
Aura of Good	Extraordinary
Detect Evil	Spell-like
Divine Grace	Supernatural
Divine Health	Extraordinary
Lay on Hands	Supernatural
Remove Disease	Spell-like
Smite Evil	Supernatural
Special Mount	Supernatural
Turn Undead	Supernatural

Nodwick

by Aaron Williams
www.nodwick.com

Retire? I'm going to stay in show business until I'm the only one left. - George Burns


MONTEKOOQUE THE MIGHTIEST RED DRAGON IN ALL THE REALMS. MONTEKOOQUE, WHOSE VERY NAME CAUSES MILK TO CURDLE, HAIR TO FALL OUT (UNLESS IT'S ON ONE'S BACK; YOU'RE PRETTY MUCH STUCK WITH THAT STUFF) AND BABIES TO SOIL THEIR NAPPIES. HIS SHEER POWER IS UNSTOPPABLE. HIS MIGHT IS UNDENIABLE. HE IS TERROR INCARNATE. HE IS WINGED BRIMSTONE. HE IS...
RETIRING.
CAN'T YOU DO THAT AFTER WE SLAY YOU?
NOT WITHOUT CONSIDERABLE PREPARATION ON MY PART, AND I MUST BE LEAVING.
NOW JUST A DARN MINUTE, HERE. DRAGONS DON'T JUST "RETIRE."
JUST LIKE DUNGEONS DON'T PUT UP "VACANCY" SIGNS?
SHUDDUP.
LIKE THE ONE BACK--
SHUDDUP.
THE WORLD MOVES ON, LITTLE MORTALS. BESIDES, THERE ARE OTHER DRAGONS TO FIGHT, OTHER DUNGEONS TO CONQUER. YOU'LL JUST HAVE TO FIND YOUR FORTUNES SOMEWHERE ELSE.
NOW, IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME, MY AGENT HAS LINED UP AN AMAZING THREE BOOK DEAL SEVERAL PLANES OVER.
I MEAN, IF THAT ABYSMAL "ERAGON" CAN SEE PRINT...
I DON'T THINK HE'S GOING TO LET US SLAY HIM.
THIS ISN'T HOW IT'S SUPPOSED TO WORK!
HOW ARE WE GOING TO RESTORE OUR REPUTATIONS NOW?
I DON'T KNOW. ARE THERE ANY MINOR GODS WE COULD PUT DOWN OR SOMETHING?
SEE THIS? THIS WAS ON THE PREVIOUS EPISODE! CONCLU-DED! DON'T YOU KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS?!
WE'LL FIND OUT NEXT TIME...
TO BE CONCLUDED!
TO BE CONTINUED!


DORK TOWER®
BY JOHN KOVALIC
OH NOES! MY COMPANIONS ARE CRITICALLY WOUNDED, AND THE TURBONIUM DRAGON IS ABOUT TO COUNTER-ATTACK!
I CAN NEVER TAKE IT ON MY OWN! THINK, SIR BILLINGSLY! THINK!
WAIT! WASN'T KEN'S CHARACTER A PRIEST OF THE GOD OF PEACE AND HEALING OF N'DAR?
YES! YES! THAT'S IT! AND HE GAVE ME A POTION OF ULTIMATE, INSTANT HEALING!
IF I CAN JUST FIND THE POTION OF ULTIMATE, INSTANT HEALING! IF I CAN JUST... HERE IT IS! HUZZAH! I'VE FOUND IT!
...AND BEHIND IT IS THE HAND-GRENADE OF WIPING OUT ALL LIFE (EXCEPT FOR THE THROWER) IN A FIFTY-FOOT RADIUS, JUST AS I THOUGHT IT WAS!
FOR A PRIEST OF THE GOD OF PEACE AND HEALIN OF N'DAR, SOME PEOPLE SURE CAN HAVE A TEMPER...
KOVALIC

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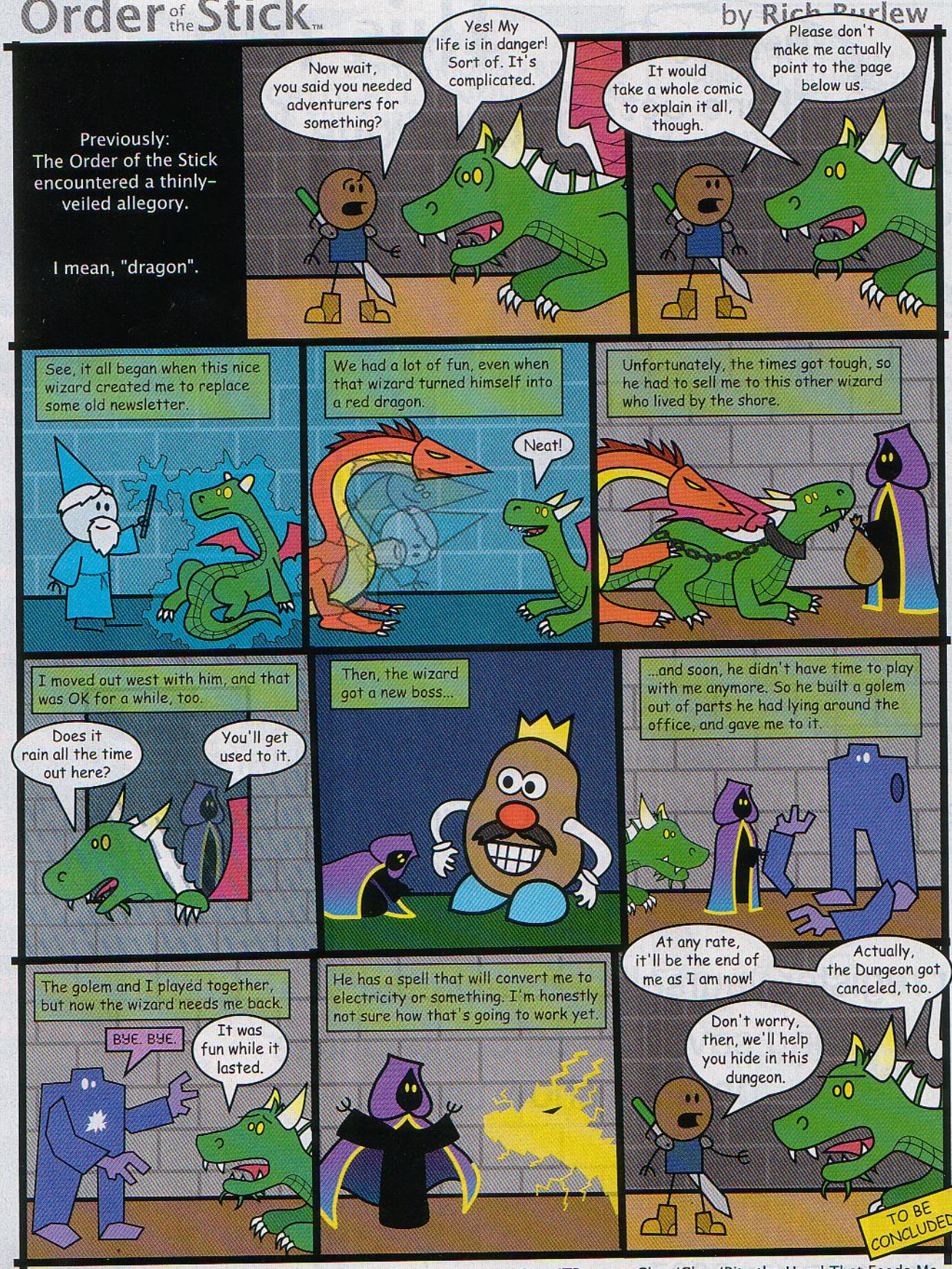
The Order of the Stick™

by Rich Burlew


Previously: The Order of the Stick encountered a thinly-veiled allegory.
I mean, "dragon".
Now wait, you said you needed adventurers for something?
Yes! My life is in danger! Sort of. It's complicated.
It would take a whole comic to explain it all, though.
Please don't make me actually point to the page below us.
See, it all began when this nice wizard created me to replace some old newsletter.
We had a lot of fun, even when that wizard turned himself into a red dragon.
Neat!
Unfortunately, the times got tough, so he had to sell me to this other wizard who lived by the shore.
I moved out west with him, and that was OK for a while, too.
Does it rain all the time out here?
You'll get used to it.
Then, the wizard got a new boss...
...and soon, he didn't have time to play with me anymore. So he built a golem out of parts he had lying around the office, and gave me to it.
The golem and I played together, but now the wizard needs me back.
BYE. BYE.
It was fun while it lasted.
He has a spell that will convert me to electricity or something. I'm honestly not sure how that's going to work yet.
At any rate, it'll be the end of me as I am now!
Actually, the Dungeon got canceled, too.
Don't worry, then, we'll help you hide in this dungeon.
TO BE CONCLUDED!

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